

**“MOLOTOV COCKTAIL PARTY”**  
**PROTEST AND HUMOR IN THE MUSIC OF MOLOTOV**

A Thesis

by

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## ABSTRACT

Molotov, a Mexico City band mixing elements of rock and hip hop, blends elements of humor and socio-political critique that place it as a staple of protest music in Mexico by articulating problems present in the country and giving voice to those who are subjugated. This thesis analyses their music as it engages with ideology, language and globalization. First, by framing the Mexican multimedia television network Televisa through Louis Althusser's theories of ideology, and analyzing what it presents its viewers as a distorted version of reality, Molotov music videos are examined as a direct attack to government-supported ideology. These videos, which articulate issues of unethical journalism and exploitative entertainment practices, showcase an opposite dystopian reality antithetic to Televisa's broadcasts. Second, Molotov's use of *albur*, a Mexican coded language packed with erotic humor, is analyzed, through Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of carnivalesque, as transgressing against ethical norms of speech by giving its users a linguistic tool for uttering what is meant to remain in silence. In addition, through the constant use of vulgar lyrics that critics would rather see removed from language, Molotov pushes the boundaries of freedom of speech and expand it to what is often interpreted as hate speech. Finally, the band's musical covers, often referred to as tributes that simultaneously parody, are observed through the lens of globalism where politicians demand Mexico become modernized and universalized with the world around it. These covers display Molotov's ability to recontextualize language, musical and linguistic, in order to adapt it for local listeners. When looking at these issues as a whole, Molotov illuminates how those in Mexico navigate the ever-changing culture they inhabit.

## **CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES**

### **Contributors**

This work was supervised by a thesis committee consisting of Professor David Donkor, advisor, and James R. Ball III of the Department of Performance Studies and Professor Maria I. Moyna of the Department of Hispanic Studies.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Just north of the historic center of Mexico City, an area known for its wide, traffic-filled streets surrounded by both destitution and opulence, lie two of Mexico's most famous destinations. The first, Tlatelolco, is an urban space shaped by three cultures—the ruins left behind by pre-Columbian Nahuas, churches used by conquistadors, and apartment buildings inhabited by present-day Mexicans can all be seen from the monument erected in memory of the student protesters massacred by the Mexican military on October 2nd, 1968. East of Tlatelolco lies one of Mexico's most notorious markets: Tepito. Aptly nicknamed El Barrio Bravo (The Fierce Neighborhood), Tepito appears as a tangled market carpeted by the stalls whose colorful roofs cover a large section of the *barrio*. In one such stall, Lourdes Ruiz Baltazar sets up her shop of baby clothes. She has worked in this market for decades and knows Tepito—its people, language, and economy—better than most. Few would realize Lourdes, who carries the demeanor of someone hardened by a rough life in El Barrio Bravo, is considered royalty. La Reina del *albur* (The Queen of *albur*), as she is also known, has earned her title through the quick wit with which she manipulates the coded language known as *albur*, where opponents take turns embarrassing each other through erotic double entendre.

It is difficult to appreciate the totality of Mexican culture without considering unjust elements such as the Tlatelolco massacre and humorous traditions such as *albur* and its users. The country itself dwells in contradictions, its residents often seen as both complacent and rebellious, its celebrities as revered and despised by audiences, and its leadership capable of

providing salvation and yet, more often than not, delivering disappointment. Neither Tlatelolco nor Tepito offer homes the wealthy would consider adequate enough to live in. However, the families residing there are some of the most representative of Mexican life. They are hardworking like the merchants in Tepito, quick to find humor in language like Lourdes, able to adapt to the changing world like the architectural landscape of Tlatelolco, and defiant like those whose blood was spilled in the same streets. Amongst the musical performances that can encompass all these issues and present them publicly, one resonates louder than the rest: Molotov.

## **1.2 A Short Biography of Molotov**

Molotov, a band originating in Mexico City in the mid-90s, is known for its use of humorous lyrics relying on *albur*. The band presents a hybrid genre that mixes musical elements of hip-hop and rock with explosive lyrics voicing concern over social problems. While Molotov is recognized for its protest music which acts as a direct attack to those in power within Mexico, it simultaneously releases songs easily interpreted as homophobic, sexist and degrading. The band raps and sings in both Spanish and English using powerful raw voices and exaggerated accents through vocal inflections that create comedic effects. The lyrics used by Molotov are considered vulgar by critics, especially in a country deeply rooted in catholic values.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is the themes discussed in their music which prove most illuminating of Mexican lower classes' navigation through a turbulent socio-political climate.

Molotov has released a total of eight albums: five containing mostly original music; one dedicated to remixes; one live performance; and a covers album. Its rise to fame began through a participation in a 1995 battle-of-the-bands style competition organized by Coca-Cola in Mexico.

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<sup>1</sup> Olallo Rubio, "Gimme The Power - Documental Completo (Olallo Rubio)." (YouTube video, 1:38:57. September 8, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MoBgwboIs0>)

The band was crowned victorious in the competition even when it perplexed organizers and fellow competitors through an unconventional implementation of vulgar rap and a rarely used line-up including two bassists.<sup>2</sup> In Mexico, the band was instantly recognized as being able to articulate transgenerational social issues by criticizing collective values held by commercial television networks and political leaders. Though the band struggled to find a recording contract due to its incendiary lyrics, piracy gave Molotov fans access to a demo prior to conventional availability of its music.<sup>3</sup> Molotov's debut album, *¿Dónde Jugarán las Niñas?* (Where will the Girls Play?, 1997), was released under contract with Universal Music and has sold over a million copies worldwide.<sup>4</sup> Adding to the commercial success of *¿Dónde Jugarán las Niñas?*, American music critics placed this album amongst the most influential releases of the year and compared Molotov to acclaimed groups such as The Beastie Boys and Rage Against the Machine.<sup>5</sup> After the band released their second album, *Apocalypshit* (1999), it embarked on a European tour that saw Molotov embraced by Russian concert goers who connected with the band's political critique and humorous nature.<sup>6</sup>

While the band's humor can be appreciated through songs such as "Changüich a la Chichona" (Sandwich for the Big Breasted Lady)—where the comedic lyrics reduce the female body to male base desires and needs—sex, consumption, and defecation—their political critique is exemplified through some of their more acclaimed works.<sup>7</sup> Such criticism is apparent in the song "Frijolero" (Beaner), which brings awareness to the tensions felt by Mexican-American

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<sup>2</sup> Rubio. "Gimme The Power - Documental Completo (Olallo Rubio)." 39:36-41:55

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 46:28-46:38

<sup>4</sup> "Molotov," Peermusic.com, accessed June 04, 2019, <http://peermusic.com/roster/328>.

<sup>5</sup> "Molotov," Esmas.com, accessed June 16, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130725100837/http://www.esmas.com/espectaculos/artistas/392647.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Molotov," Peermusic.com.

<sup>7</sup> Molotov," Peermusic.com.



immigrants, and “Gimme tha Power”, which speaks about class inequality within Mexico and places the blame on a deceitful government.<sup>8</sup> Though twenty years have passed since its release, the lyrics from “Gimme tha Power” remain a staple in Mexican protests even when it received no airtime on Mexican radio stations.<sup>9</sup> This can be seen through a YouTube video showing activists singing the lyrics as they face off against riot police in the Mexican state of Chihuahua.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in the streets of Mexico City, a protests urging the government to take responsibility for the 2014 mass kidnapping of 42 activists was led by a van blasting the song as protestors sang along.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, in Molotov’s recent unplugged album, *El Desconecte* (2018), fans can be heard loudly chanting as the band plays “Gimme tha Power”.<sup>12</sup>

Though Molotov has received numerous awards for their music and music videos, the band remains largely out of academic discourse.<sup>13</sup> An exception is the immigrant song “Frijolero,” which has received tangential discussion in analysis of performances surrounding immigration.<sup>14</sup> While this analysis connects Molotov’s lyrics and music video issues of immigration, its scope is limited by neglecting a discussion of other themes discussed throughout Molotov’s career. Another notable exception is María del Carmen de la Peza’s analysis of the grotesque female body described in rock and hip-hop.<sup>15</sup> This article discusses Molotov in more

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Olallo Rubio, “Gimme the Power: Entrevista a Olallo Rubio,” interview by Alan Ramírez, *El Semanario*, accessed June 16, 2019, [https://elsemanario.com/revista\\_semanal/387\\_26\\_1\\_jun/buenavida/index.html](https://elsemanario.com/revista_semanal/387_26_1_jun/buenavida/index.html).

<sup>10</sup> Fabian Vidal, “‘Gimme the power’ entonada por manifestantes.” YouTube video, 21 Oct 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fV10ZzfxIY>.

<sup>11</sup> Pedro Puas, “Gimme The Power - Marcha a un año de los sucesos de Ayotzinapa.” YouTube video, Sep 26, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckR7gGDDSIg>.

<sup>12</sup> Molotov Oficial, “Molotov - Gimme Tha Power (MTV Unplugged).” YouTube video, Aug 9 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDOIv-I58AQ>.

<sup>13</sup> Molotov, “Peermusic.com.”

<sup>14</sup> Lynnaire M. Sheridan. “The Migrants Voice in Popular Music.” In *“I Know It’s Dangerous”: Why Mexicans Risk Their Lives to Cross the Border*, 138-65. (Tucson: Arizona Press, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Maria Del Carmen De La Peza, “La Imagen Grotesca Del Cuerpo Femenino En Las Canciones De Molotov: ¿Hacia Un Nuevo Tipo De Grotesco Realista?” *Fuentes Humanísticas* 34 (2007), [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=fua&AN=31337392&site=eds-live](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=fua&AN=31337392&site=eds-live).

depth and gives a better understanding of both their musical genre and lyrics. However, the analysis given by del Carmen does not include any insight into Molotov's music that discuss issues outside the female body. Considering the vast array of themes discussed through the band's music, analyzing Molotov's music presents different avenues for research that I believe need to be explored in order to better understand contemporary Mexican culture.

One such topic is the band's attacks on broadcasting television networks in Mexico, with Televisa being the principal network scrutinized. It seems no coincidence then that Molotov's first studio album, *¿Dónde Jugarán las Niñas?*, begins with the song "Que no te haga Bobo Jacobo" (Don't Let Jacobo Fool You). This song references Mexican journalist and news anchor Jacobo Zabludovsky and presents his legacy as one of constant misinformation ordered by politicians seeking personal profit. My aim here is to understand why Molotov, while choosing to build humor through coded messages of *albur*, also decide to write direct lyrics for political criticism. In other words, why not use indirect messages to attack a person who, at the time, had unrivaled influence in Mexican media?

It is also important to observe how both *albur* and Mexico's socio-political history are showcased in Molotov's performances. Analyzing lyrics containing *albur*, when contextualized within Mexican humor, illuminates on problems of globalization that showcases the navigation of a Mexican community adapting to an everchanging world that demands their subordination. Recently, I have become particularly interested in the transcultural exchanges that occur within Mexico. While the conservative media and political figures in the United States continue to push an anti-immigration narrative claiming that countries such as Mexico are "sending" people who want to take advantage of the U.S. government, the American transcultural flows to other countries is currently ignored in popular discourse. People such as Randy "El Gringo Loco"

Clifford Ebright–Molotov’s drummer and vocalist, who emigrated from the U.S. to Mexico at the age of fifteen—are testament that immigration in the American continent is not always U.S.-centric and not always northward. The Mexican band members—bassists Miguel Ángel “Micky” Huidobro Preciado and Juan Francisco “Paco” Ayala, along with guitarist Ismael “Tito” Fuentes de Garay—all rap and sing and code switch between Spanish, English and *albur*, giving the band a unique hybridity as complex as their musicality, which blends global and local genres informed by cultural flows reaching Mexico. Molotov, like the communities they represent, do not abide by rules of language. Its performances transgress speech norms by articulating problems that push the envelope of freedom of speech. While some of their songs attempt to persuade listeners to consider civil rights for all, other songs lean towards homophobia, body shaming and sexist ideals. The study presented here does not attempt to judge the morality of the band; rather, it is a means to observe how Molotov’s performance is a mirror image of the power struggles within the country. With this in mind, it is necessary to consider Molotov by asking to whom do these problems belong? What are the identities of those represented through the voices produced by Molotov? And why is it important to give them a voice?

However, Molotov’s creative performance is not limited to their lyrics, since they have also been praised for their multimedia music videos. These videos offer a visual perspective that complements Molotov’s music. While it might prove easy to understand the lyrics to songs such as “Que no te Haga Bobo Jacobo”, the music video that accompanies the song includes dystopic images that highlight the oppression felt by Mexican lower classes who possess few alternatives for information and entertainment. The visual artistry in such videos proves to be at times just as ambiguous and/or ambivalent as Molotov’s *albur*. Such is the case for the music video “El Carnal de las Estrellas”, which presents lyrics depicting the sexual exploitation in the

entertainment industry but the images of the video show a puppet show reenactment of Frankenstein. In short, the images presented in these videos can offer significant insight into answering the questions asked above.

The importance of Molotov's music and music videos lies in giving voice to people who suffer most from powerful forces at work in Mexico. These forces stem from the influence of television networks, language, and globalism. Molotov declares television networks to be unethical in the same way done by those whose voices are kept from broadcasts, such as former employees and political activists. Where language is concerned, Molotov puts to question the standards of speech Mexicans are told to uphold. This is done through lyrics built on a mocking humor that is used by the Mexican working class and was similarly used by natives upon the Spanish arrival to the Americas. Globalism in Mexico is inherently tied to a political push for modernizing the country. Molotov engages this topic by recontextualizing global ideas of language and music genre by creating humorous covers of songs known to by their fanbase.

### **1.3 Chapter Outline and Conclusion**

The following thesis is separated into three chapters presenting analysis and a fourth chapter concluding the findings presented. Chapter II focuses on the history of the multimedia corporation Televisa and the attacks Molotov has articulated through their music videos "Que no te Haga Bobo Jacobo" and "El Carnal de las Estrellas". In this chapter, Televisa is presented as tool of the government used to keep Mexican viewers subjugated through entertainment and journalism. While "Que no te Haga Bobo Jacobo" questions unethical journalism as exemplified by Televisa's handling of the Tlatelolco massacre reports, "El Carnal de las Estrellas" paints Televisa and its entertainment producers as sexual deviants who prostitute their employees. This chapter shows how Molotov gives voice to the concern many Mexicans have over the

questionable practices Televisa enacts and how these methods keep Mexicans oppressed by giving them a distorted version of reality.

Chapter III focuses on contextualizing *albur* as a humorous technique that gives Mexicans the tools to voice matters widely considered taboo within the country. By considering the indigenous roots of *albur*, as well as the arrival of the Spanish language in the Americas, Molotov's lyrics are shown to be a means for freedom of speech and they force a discussion of the extent to which this right should be protected. Through this chapter, language is presented as a battleground of conquest, in which Mexicans continue expressing their experiences and desires despite outside influences attempting to control their speech. Through examples of *albur* presence in Molotov's performances, as well as utterances of what many consider hate speech, language is analyzed as having the potential to protest both directly and indirectly.

Chapter IV will engage with theories of globalization and how musical styles cross borders and are later localized by musicians. I will use Molotov's musical tributes, often considered parodies, to understand how the band morphs music in order to apply it for local purposes. This analysis exposes both hip-hop and rock as global music that has spread the English language. Furthermore, I will present examples of clashes between these styles and their purposes and Mexican cultural traditions and needs in order to understand what recontextualization of global ideas needed for local relatability. In this chapter, I will focus on the album *Con Todo Respeto* (With All Due Respect; 2004) as a source of musical covers/tributes/parodies that exemplify Molotov's recreation of global music.

In the final chapter, the ideas presented will be tied together in a conclusion. While critics see Molotov's music as too disruptive, others celebrate it for remaining a vocal front able to articulate social problems which continue to plague Mexico. However, to reduce the band's

significance by defining it exclusively as protest music would be a disservice to what they represent. There are many issues presented in their current oeuvre and it is impossible to observe all of them within the scope of this thesis. For this reason, the concluding chapter will also offer those problems which merit further research within Molotov's music. It is my hope that the analysis of Molotov presented here can provide insight into a rich Mexican culture that, while being full of contradiction, dissatisfaction and oppression, never loses its sense of humor.

## CHAPTER II

### MIRRORS OF REALITY:

### MOLOTOV AND TELEVISA

“Mexico is a country with a large class of people who are screwed. Television’s responsibility is to bring these people entertainment and distract them from their sad reality and difficult future.”<sup>16</sup>

- Emilio Azcárraga Milmo

#### 2.1 Introduction

Television programming plays an important role in public perception of reality. While news programs contextualize information to keep viewers informed on social, political, and cultural events, entertainment programming offers diversions from everyday life. However, for Molotov, television seems to present a multitude of problems. In fact, every album the band has released contains at least one song referencing television and, for the exception of “Hit Me” off of *Dance and Dense Denso* (2003), where television is said to have the power to promote unity amongst Mexicans, all mentions of television are negative. The perception Molotov has of television is informed by the treatment of broadcasts in Mexico, where the multimedia giant Grupo Televisa (formerly known as Televisión and later Telesistema Mexicano) provides both news and entertainment to its viewers. Though there are alternative news and entertainment outlets in Mexico, Televisa is a monopoly in everything but name; and this creates a one-sided impression of reality. For decades, the company’s unrivaled viewership consistently allowed their unethical journalistic and entertainment practices to go unchallenged in a meaningful way.

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<sup>16</sup> Christina Slade, "Telenovelas and Soap Operas: Negotiating Reality from the Periphery," ed. Ilan Stavans, in *Telenovelas* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2010).

The misrepresentation of Mexico brought on by Televisa is clear when broadcasts are compared with actuality.

Televisa is known for *telenovelas*, which have become a prominent international export. And while these soap operas offer little more than daydream escapes for the millions of viewers who want to believe that *they* could be the next Cinderella, the acting industry is more controversial than audiences realize. Rumors surrounding Televisa's sexual scandals have suggested the existence of a catalog offering celebrities to Televisa's investors as escorts.<sup>17</sup> But in a country where Televisa is the main news outlet, it is relatively easy for the alleged insidious practice to continue. While former *telenovela* actress Kate del Castillo is the most significant celebrity to recently speak of the catalog's existence,<sup>18</sup> Molotov has been outspoken about the same sexual exploitation for decades. The band is in fact one of the most relentless critics of Televisa. Its oeuvre is charged with explosive condemnation of the broadcast's corrupt practices. The band's lyrics speak directly to Televisa's lack of journalistic integrity and sexual misconduct. Additionally, Molotov's visual message through videos proposes an alternative reality, one in which Televisa and its producers are the antagonists in the struggles faced by Mexicans in their everyday life. Although Molotov's lyrics accuse both company and high-ranking leadership by name, their music videos present visual aids that reinforce their conclusions. Molotov's music videos can range from playful, humorous imagery to the grotesque dystopian, and it is within the latter that Televisa is denounced. These videos are not imagined within a creative vacuum; rather, they offer a reconceptualized truth that unmasks the company's

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<sup>17</sup> Regina V. Moreno, "Kate Del Castillo Revela En Documental Trato Denigrante a Actrices De Televisa," *Quién*, October 25, 2017, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://www.quien.com/espectaculos/2017/10/24/kate-del-castillo-revela-en-documental-trato-denigrante-a-actrices-de-televisa>.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*



producers as Frankenstein-like pimps of actresses and displays its news anchors as deceiving hypnotists of the Mexican public.

Televisa's status as Mexico's most powerful media corporation positions them as a useful tool for state control over its population. This rarely contested status offers insight into the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party; *el PRI*) and its seventy-year grasp on Mexico's political system.<sup>19</sup> However, Televisa's practices are different from those enacted by state agencies such as the military and federal police, because they are not repressive through violent attacks on the population. Instead, the company represents an important case study on what Louis Althusser describes as the ideological state apparatus (ISA).<sup>20</sup> Televisa works to undermine those who criticize corruption in Mexico, it mandates what *mexicanidad* (Mexicanness) is supposed to be, and, through entertainment and biased journalism, it filters truth and transforms it into ideological messages prescribed by those in power. Molotov themselves contest these values directly. For them, *mexicanidad* extends past the curated assortment of beauties presented in *telenovelas* and it includes distorted bodies that carry the scars of violent conflict and injustice. Molotov challenges Televisa by educating audiences through alternative narratives which engage with the company's viewers, not the company itself.

## **2.2 Televisa: Mexico's Tool for Governance**

Various conclusions can be drawn about the extent of Televisa's effects on its viewers, especially concerning political and cultural values held in Mexico. However, while Televisa is often found to favor Mexico's most successful political party, *el PRI*, by presenting news reports contradicting reality, their entertainment productions are rarely analyzed as constructing

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<sup>19</sup> Celeste Gonzalez De Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches: Mexico, Television, and the Cold War*, trans. Richard Cole (Lincoln: UNP - Nebraska Paperback, 2013), xxii.

<sup>20</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. from the French by Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

prescribed ideals for the masses. Though this ideology is mainly created by producers, the political and social pressure to shape Televisa points to the cultural struggle to define *mexicanidad*. Televisa's news and *telenovelas* have always presented a set of values and instruction for its audience, and although not all viewers agree with broadcasts, the company's messages can be widely interpreted as mandating what the ruling class considers appropriate behavior. This is not to say that the state requires pre-approval of everything receiving airtime; however, through legal means, the state can safely ensure that appropriately innocuous messages, such as those found in Televisa, are the most readily available. By observing Televisa's alignment with state values, this multimedia company emerges as an important part of the cultural ideological state apparatus (ISA), which not only reproduces state control, but also drowns out narratives that stem from alternative media.

What began in the early 20th century as a radio empire built by Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta, previously regarded as the czar of Mexican radio,<sup>21</sup> is now an international multimedia enterprise that represents one of the largest Spanish-speaking company of its kind worldwide. Through three generations of the Azcárraga family as company leaders, Televisa maneuvered through the various social, political, cultural, and global problems Mexico faced in the second half of the 20th century. In the early stages of building the infrastructure necessary for television broadcast, Azcárraga Vidaurreta was able to secure the third concession to broadcast on Mexican television, founding Televisión on 1952.<sup>22</sup> The development of television in Mexico became complicated by both state and capitalist interests which pushed entrepreneurs to merge with rival companies, a practice described as “conquer-and-consolidate” that would

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<sup>21</sup> Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches*, xxi

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 5

eventually create Televisa.<sup>23</sup> Twenty years after the inauguration of Televiscentro, Emilio Azcárraga Milmo, heir to Azcárraga Vidaurreta's empire, would find himself in control of over 90% of Mexican television broadcast stations.<sup>24</sup>

Televisa began and continues to operate in Mexico's capital city and as is usually the case for cultures worldwide, this fact shapes the productions coming from it. Throughout Mexico's history, no Mexican city has been able to rival the infrastructure, influence and economic power of Mexico City. The capital not only houses the federal governing body of the country, but it also is the seat of the country's most respected university, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico), the national soccer team Aztec stadium (Estadio Azteca), and a multitude of spaces containing cultural artifacts of importance to Mexican identity, such as the Museo Nacional de Antropología (National Museum of Anthropology) and the Palacio de Bellas Artes (Fine Arts Palace). Mexico City has always garnered national and international attention that translates into a struggle between the wants and needs of the capital and those of living outside of it. When it comes to television, the conflict was between those looking to capitalize on the new medium and a struggling lower class expected to become the consumers of it.

While Televisa's currently holds virtually worldwide broadcast reach, in its initial stages, television was a commodity not all Mexican residents could afford, and one usually reserved to the capital's inhabitants. Television sets became a status symbol and, even when most could not afford the high prices of television sets, viewers flocked to them to stay informed about current events. By 1957, there were over three hundred thousand television sold thus far in Mexico, and

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<sup>23</sup> Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches*, 21-22

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 5

two years later, the sales of the product broke records as 120,000 were sold in a single year nationwide.<sup>25</sup> Broadcasting companies, many of which would come to be owned by Televisa, began to pop up throughout the country.<sup>26</sup> Culturally, viewers were given access to fashion, sports and music. This gave audiences images that they saw as representing current trends which some assimilated.<sup>27</sup> The socio-political broadcasts were more problematic: as tensions between the government and its people increased, laws began to dictate what could reach the airwaves.

Televisa's foothold on Mexican culture was assured through a set of transformations that allowed the company to stay in relative favor of the state. Throughout the 20th century, the Mexican government introduced legislation to regulate media industries, some of which had lasting ramifications on what viewers were exposed to and came to expect. First, in 1960, stations gave free airtime to the government as mandated by federal law.<sup>28</sup> This assured that the government was able to set up emergency transmission, but also gave them the power to broadcast cultural, social and educational programs free of charge. Furthermore, a provision of the same law states that broadcast was not allowed to "corrupt the Spanish language, violate the accepted customs of the community, encourage anti-social behavior, denigrate national heroes, offend commonly held religious beliefs or discriminate on the grounds of race or color."<sup>29</sup> Though it is impossible to determine what course Televisa's broadcast values would have taken if not for this provision, Azcárraga Vidaurreta's empire survived and eventually grew through its adherence to laws promoting the dissemination of state ideology. Because the law stipulated that change of ownership must have government approval,<sup>30</sup> and Azcárraga Vidaurreta's strategy of

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<sup>25</sup> Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches*, 17

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 10

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 15

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 16

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

consolidating with rival companies also assured that broadcast was easily managed by the state, Televisa created standardized journalistic and entertainment practices aligned with government mandates.

### **2.3 Televisa's Cultural Productions as Ideology**

Several of Televisa's programming practices serve as evidence of the company's status as a significant tool for state power. It is important then to review Louis Althusser's theories on the different ways in which state apparatuses operate. By using Althusser's distinction between repressive and ideological state apparatuses and applying these ideas to Televisa's practices, instances of journalism and entertainment broadcast by the company begin to inform on what the ruling class in Mexico expects of its subjects. From this perspective, two prominent figures from Televisa's history emerge as culprits: Jacobo Zabludovsky and Luis de Llano Macedo. While Zabludovsky, for decades considered the face of news in Mexico, has previously admitted to the presence of agreements between Televisa and *el PRI*, he denies political alliance was ever required of him.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, De Llano, recognized for his work as producer of popular *telenovelas* and music groups, has never, to the best of my knowledge, admitted the presence of state influence within his productions. However, whether or not their productions are consciously meant to sway the public towards state prescribed ideals, owner Azcarraga Milmo called himself "a soldier of *el PRI*" several times over the years, and this fact should not go unnoted.<sup>32</sup> The unparalleled mediatic power held by Televisa as a social informant and entertainment provider within Mexico should be scrutinized and held responsible when their ethical shortcomings affect the socio-political and cultural spectrum inhabited by the general population of Mexico.

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<sup>31</sup> Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches*, xxiv

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

In his work, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Althusser articulates the defining elements of ideological state apparatuses and distinguishes them from repressive state apparatuses. The distinction lies on whether repression, often through violence, is the apparatus' most prominent tactic to control the public. Televisa's productions can be interpreted as mandating appropriate behavior that falls in line with ideological belief systems. However, as a commercial company unattached to the state, at least on paper, Televisa does not appear to have means to coerce through violent repression. On the other hand, in order for the state to continue its control, it must be able to produce the capital needed to further its legacy while also persuading its subjects to continue the production of cultural artifacts. Althusser describes this as "the reproduction of the conditions of production."<sup>33</sup> This requires the state to be able to convince its subjects that its ideals are the only ones permitted. First and foremost, antithetic views from those of the state must be repressed. The clearest examples of repression are carried out by state agencies such as the military and the police. In Mexico, this is often the outcome of public protests and political opposition, which often faces violent state reactions. However, dissuading the public demanding socio-political change through protest has the potential to prevent conflicts that place blame on the state. Despite that, when conflict does occur, ISAs may work towards reshaping narratives in order to placate tensions and reproduce the conditions of production. It is not important for subjects to subscribe to the state's ideology, but it is necessary for those who disapprove to understand that subscribing to contradicting ideologies carries repercussions.

For Althusser, ideology deals directly with how reality is interpreted and embodied. First, he posits that ideology is representative of the relationship individuals have with the world

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<sup>33</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, 1

around them.<sup>34</sup> But this representation, as prescribed by the ruling class, is one that is imagined for its people, giving them a strong suggestion of how life should be lived, as well as what should be valued. Second, there is an understanding that ideology cannot simply be disseminated to subjects, but they must also realize their place within the ideology and enact it themselves. For Althusser, this means “ideology has a material existence.”<sup>35</sup> Within the ideologies promoted by Mexico, the history of television is a simple example that can inform on the capitalist ideals promoted in the country and how these priorities are enacted (materialized) by its people.

As previously discussed, purchases of television sets in Mexico saw an exponential growth in the middle of the 20th century. This growth came as television began to offer what other industries could not. While Mexican radio had provided listeners with sports coverage and analysis since the 1930s,<sup>36</sup> television could offer viewers images to attach to what they heard. Here we have an important understanding of supply and demand from the industry; in fact, and because of this understanding, Televisa’s history in entertainment is entangled with sports; it is no coincidence that Azcárraga Vidaurreta’s first television broadcast was a baseball game.<sup>37</sup> Further explanation is required to fully grasp the various ways in which ideology permeates social classes through sports within Mexican media, a point to be discussed in further detail in the next chapter. For now, it is only necessary to know that sports are considered culturally important within the country, as they offer fans a point of pride, through recognizable athletes, when comparing the local, national and international values. For those who could not afford the cost of entering a stadium or even travelling to cities hosting sporting events, television offered

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<sup>34</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, 27

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 28

<sup>36</sup> Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches*, 5

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

different means to witness these events. Those who chose to watch televised broadcast in bars and restaurants paid one time fees per event; however, as television sets in Mexico became “an article of first necessity,” some families went through great financial strain attempting to buy them through monthly installment plans.<sup>38 39</sup> And that is a prime example of “the reproduction of the conditions of production”: the means of reproduction of the ideology were in fact purchased by the very classes that needed to be convinced of this ideology.

By turning television sets into a “necessity,” the ruling class in Mexico was able to coerce the working class to continue their labor while assuring that large portions of their salaries would be recirculated through the capitalist system. In Althusser’s definition of ideology an imagined perception of relationships to reality must first be assessed, followed by an observation of the materialization of such an idea; the monthly installments become important for economic control of the masses. First there is a push to consider cultural events as best witnessed through images that can be displayed through television. Then, television sets are presented as a status symbol that owners may choose to display to attract other community members—as was done by businesses looking to expand patronage. Finally, with prices of televisions being too high for most, a solution is found through installment plans. And while these installments ensure that the lower class is (marginally) able to afford it, it also ensures that they are financially liable to keep laboring in order to meet this new financial burden. The results is a lower class’ continuation of production, that is simultaneously reproduced again through television sets, as the programming broadcast is most often paid through advertisement seeking to sell other products that push its most impoverished viewers to continue working so they may afford them.

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<sup>38</sup> Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches*, 17

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 10



Here it should be reiterated that a number of different agencies, many of them private entities, can fall under the umbrella of ideological state apparatuses. Althusser sets two examples that serve as ISAs, churches and schools, both of which function through similar means and can help propagate ideologies, though their power is largely dependent on the ruling class in place. ISAs such as schools and churches have the means to interact with large sections of the population at once and can therefore spread messages through their congregations or classrooms. Both have standards for acceptable behavior within their spaces and repercussions for those who step out of line (expulsion, punishment, shaming, etc.).<sup>40</sup> Television networks have their own means of punishment. The technology available for the medium has given Televisa the power for a continuously growing reach, and through their broadcasts, their messages are disseminated. But because their headquarters are located in Mexico City, they must first and foremost abide by Mexican legislation, such as rules that stipulate what is considered appropriate behavior. Looking at Televisa's reach, especially through the virtual monopolization of television within Mexico, modes of repression can also be disseminated. In the following section I offer an analysis of Televisa's main product, *telenovelas*, and the news coverage of the 1968 student protests and Summer Olympics in Mexico, in order to draw examples that in themselves explain why Molotov's music resonates with the working class of Mexico.

## **2.4 Mexican Cinderella Stories and Televisa's Repressive Behavior**

Televisa's practices can be perceived as a mirror for Mexico's interests and challenges. With its wide marketing of entertainment, Televisa set standards of Mexican identity, *mexicanidad*, both nationally and in the diaspora abroad. Televisa's *telenovelas* are shown in over a hundred countries worldwide and they represent one of the biggest entertainment products

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<sup>40</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, 14.

consumed locally and exported.<sup>41</sup> While the morally conservative values promoted through *telenovela* characters can be dangerous on their own, behind the scenes many *telenovela* actresses have faced the reality of male depredation in the hands of their colleagues and television executives, at odds with the public standards of the medium, and hidden from the public eye. In contrast, the values showcased through news broadcasting is one of misinformation and smear. While the government, especially members of *el PRI*, are often presented by Televisa as blameless about many of Mexico's biggest social issues, those who take a stance against the state find themselves receiving little neutral coverage. The Televisa entertainment industry and its lack of journalism integrity are the two issues that Molotov is critical of.

A rather obvious example of repressive behavior is through employment. Televisa gets to choose who appears in their broadcasts and only those deemed to represent the company's values are allowed to appear in front of viewers. In Televisa, the lucrative business of *telenovelas* is produced in the studios aptly nicknamed *Fábrica de Sueños* (Factory of Dreams). The dreams Televisa offers the public are twofold: 1) imagined parallel realities full of realized Cinderella dreams; and 2) the real-life celebrities who play these characters, and whose rise to stardom is the embodiment of the "dream life," namely, the possibility of economic success in the country. But both of these dreams are themselves promoting ideals that contradict everyday life for residents of Mexico. While the archaic characters in *telenovelas* present binary visions of good and evil that leave no room for the complex issues lived on the streets of the country, celebrities must also adhere to company standards. Anyone who does not comply with those standards is

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<sup>41</sup> Marcia Trejo, *La Telenovela Mexicana: Orígenes, Características, Análisis Y Perspectivas* (México, D.F.: Trillas, 2011), 25.

unlikely to be hired. And anyone who breaks from them while employed likely faces termination or smear campaigns designed to discourage such behavior.

On the surface, *telenovelas* can be considered elaborate reworkings of the Cinderella story line. Protagonists succeed against all odds and antagonists suffer grave consequences for their actions. The most memorable *telenovela* storylines are structured around a community of characters usually led by a female whose character development is dependent on romance, while she is faced with the moral choices of all Latina women. Gender norms, romance, religious and family life, and economic struggles are evaluated in every episode. However, what is presented as reality within these shows is not an accurate representation of Mexican life. The fabricated sets and bodies found within *Fábrica de Sueños* offer a different truth than what they claim to represent. While *telenovelas* don't shy away from discussing social problems, and most of their programming relies on it, they offer few solutions to actual problems. Pablo Helguera, argues that the tensions of social issues are in fact a necessary element for Televisa's *telenovelas*, and this tension must result in an ending where love conquers all:

But as in Plato's cave, the shadows projected are instinctively recognized by the viewer: that is, the fiction presented by the *telenovela* alludes to all kinds of desires, fantasies, and anxieties of an entire social class, selling dreams of self-help and offering a collective catharsis for those class issues never confronted in real life.<sup>42</sup>

Helguera wrote this as part of an introductory essay to photographs taken by Stefan Ruiz within Televisa's studios. These photographs show an array of elaborate sets designed to fit the lives of Mexican families. But as they are part of a fabricated reality, the images reveal a structured landscape of immaculate precision. The homes of wealthy families are shown in different cultural styles, ranging from rural rustic mansions to spacious modern residences. Their

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<sup>42</sup> Pablo Helguera, "The Factory of Dreams: The Mexican Telenovela as Portrayed by Stefan Ruiz," in *The Factory of Dreams: Inside Televisa Studios* (New York: Aperture, 2012).

homes are filled with status symbols such as fountains, animal rugs, sculptures, in-home bars, etc. The difference between these sets and those designed to show those living in impoverished areas is significant. Not only are these scenes surrounding poverty designed as a chaotic mess antithetic to the organization presented in their wealthy counterparts, but their inhabitants differ greatly. When contrasted, the sets produce characters that are just as different, with the lower-class seemingly as disheveled as their homes, and their polar opposites' impeccable bodies faithful to their fictitious home's aesthetic.

However, as simplistic as this might be when distilled to surface level descriptions, *telenovelas* are a complex entity that represent various interests. Besides the interest of producers, who are seeking to achieve high ratings and viewership, there are commercial sponsors attaching their names in hopes of brand exposure, government officials dictating what appropriate broadcasting is, viewers seeking entertainment, and actors attempting to achieve stardom and economic prosperity. While a detailed look at how these elements come together would be far too great an undertaking for this project, each must be acknowledged in order to reach a more complete understanding of the genre and its shortcomings as a representation of reality.

First, commercial sponsors are a necessity for the high-priced production of *telenovelas*, and while not all successful shows have a main sponsor, many productions seek sponsors that go beyond the commercials shown between the broadcasted segments. According to sociologist Marcia Trejo Silva, one of purposes served by the genre of *telenovelas* is to provide an ideal relationship to reality which serves the interests of sponsors.<sup>43</sup> Props are a prime example—such as consumable, cosmetic, cleaning, and other products—meant to appear as products the

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<sup>43</sup> Trejo, *La Telenovela Mexicana*, 142

characters prefer to purchase, and which can often be antithetic to the character's story arch.<sup>44</sup> Second, governmental guidelines are observed to the extent that a full department assures productions follow these restrictions. Televisa's Department of Literary Supervision is tasked with compliance with the mandates of the "secretariat to the Mexican government which supervises and controls censorship".<sup>45</sup> Third, the viewers are another fundamental element; while they understand that *telenovelas* are not realistic, until recently they had few alternative forms of entertainment. This problem is compounded when complex issues are distilled through *telenovela*'s melodramatic and binary nature. Due to the low levels of education in the targeted audiences, complexity may result in a loss of viewership;<sup>46</sup> however, the reduction of these complexities means that audiences who are inexperienced in the social circumstances presented in *telenovelas* may digest these relations as social education for when these events present themselves in real life.<sup>47</sup>

Fourth, the performers in *telenovelas*, many of whom are willing to do all that's necessary to achieve celebrity status, often fall into a predatory industry. This point deserves more unpacking than the previous three, as it is the main point of contention for Molotov's music video "El Carnal de las Estrellas" (Brother of the Stars).<sup>48</sup> A close look at the characters presented in *telenovelas* shows a clear preference for certain body types. As shown in the photographs taken by Ruiz, there is a preference for actors that are not representative of the physical/ethnic/physionomic attributes of the average Mexican, which are more likely to have

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<sup>44</sup> Laura J. Beard, "Whose Life in the Mirror? Analysing Three Mexican Telenovelas as Cultural and Commercial Products" ed. Ilan Stavans, in *Telenovelas* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2010), 128-9

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 118

<sup>46</sup> Trejo, *La Telenovela Mexicana*, 69

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 74

<sup>48</sup> The Spanish "carnal" is literally translated to the English "carnal" and the song itself makes references to lustful carnal desires. However, throughout Molotov's music, this word is exclusively used as Mexican vernacular that is synonymous with "brother."

*mestizo* heritage rather than the European bodies types displayed on television; this creates an aspired body type which *telenovelas* present as the only ones allowed to receive happiness.<sup>49</sup> When looking at the values held by Televisa, there is a clear exclusion of the lower Mexican class. According to scholar of philosophy and media Cristina Slade, some of the early conventions followed by Televisa's producers ruled out both showing poverty and anyone of native descent, except as laborers or house maids. Although this is not the case anymore, it has shaped perceptions of beauty and ethnicity for many Mexican households.<sup>50</sup> A common formula, known as the "María" *telenovela*, derived from these mandates; the plot surrounds a fair, well-mannered house servant who achieves a Cinderella-like happily-ever-after by marrying the son of the significantly more wealthy household.<sup>51</sup> These fairytale ideals again promote a female type (a fair, well-mannered, servant) and instructions for success in life, through marriage into a wealthier family.

More startling, however, is the treatment of actresses who are sexually exploited by producers or slandered when speaking out against Televisa or the Mexican government. In 2017, *telenovela* actress Kate del Castillo revealed in a Netflix documentary series that Televisa commonly sexualized the actresses they employed and forced them to attend dinners as dates of publicists.<sup>52</sup> In an interview with TVNotas, Castillo exposed such offenses to Televisa president Emilio Azcárraga, whom she was romantically involved with at the time, in an attempt to persuade him to end improper behavior in the company. Instead, Azcárraga ended their

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<sup>49</sup> Trejo, *La Telenovela Mexicana*, 135

<sup>50</sup> Slade, "Telenovelas and Soap Operas: Negotiating Reality from the Periphery," 54

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Regina V. Moreno, "Kate Del Castillo Revela En Documental Trato Denigrante a Actrices De Televisa," *Quién*, October 25, 2017, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://www.quien.com/espectaculos/2017/10/24/kate-del-castillo-revela-en-documental-trato-denigrante-a-actrices-de-televisa>.

relationship.<sup>53</sup> Years later, as she exposed Televisa's practices through the aforementioned documentary, she spoke of being pressured into entertaining men whom she did not know, describing the practice as akin to prostitution.<sup>54</sup> This has since been echoed by other actresses who confirm the existence of a catalog offering them as "companions" to publicists and people in power, which in turn resulted in favoritism for those who complied with demands.<sup>55</sup> Castillo suffered greatly for her statements, as well as for claiming it would be impossible for Mexico's former first lady, who was also an actress employed by Televisa, to have bought a seven million dollar home without her husband's corrupt practices.<sup>56</sup> This led to slander from Televisa, who attempted to invalidate Castillo's claims by attacking her character, as the government ordered surveillance of the Castillo family.<sup>57</sup>

While actresses, journalists, politicians and citizens take sides in the developing saga against Castillo, it is interesting to note how one Televisa producer has chosen to answer critics. In the wake of the #MeToo movement, Luis de Llano Macedo shifted blame from Televisa and its partners and placed it on both "talentless" actresses willing to seduce their way into fame and on tabloid journalism, which Llano claimed propagates lies in order to sell magazines, saying

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<sup>53</sup> "Kate Del Castillo Terminó Con Dueño De Televisa ¡por Injusta Razón!" TVNotas, March 15, 2017, accessed June 03, 2019, <http://www.tvnotas.com.mx/noticias-espectaculos-mexico/kate-del-castillo-termino-con-dueno-de-televisa-por-injusta-razon>.

<sup>54</sup> "Kate Del Castillo Confirma Rumores: Televisa Ofrece a Actrices Como Prostitutas." TVNotas. October 26, 2017. Accessed May 11, 2018. <http://www.tvnotas.com.mx/noticias-espectaculos-mexico/kate-del-castillo-confirma-rumores-televisa-ofrece-actrices-como>.

<sup>55</sup> "Estrella De Telenovelas Confirmó Existencia De Un Catálogo Sexual De Actrices De Televisa," Infobae, February 13, 2019, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://www.infobae.com/america/entretenimiento/2019/02/13/estrella-de-telenovelas-confirio-existencia-de-un-catalogo-sexual-de-actrices-de-televisa/>.

<sup>56</sup> "La Controversia Que Causó La Actriz Kate Del Castillo Con Su Serie De Netflix Al "acusar a Artistas Mexicanas De Prostituirse" - BBC News Mundo," BBC News, December 07, 2017, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-42260644>.

<sup>57</sup> Carlos A. Monjaraz, "Presentaron El Libro De Kate Del Castillo En Contra Del Gobierno," TVNotas, February 24, 2019, accessed June 03, 2019, <http://www.tvnotas.com.mx/noticias-espectaculos-mexico/presentaron-el-libro-de-kate-del-castillo-en-contra-del-gobierno>.

“all this is simply a narrative transformed into rumor.”<sup>58</sup> While this statement could serve as an explanation for why Televisa has continuously been the recipient of such rumors, it does little to dispel them, does not engage with the actresses who claim to have suffered unwanted advances, and offers no solutions to assure the public that the practice has been eradicated. Llano’s perspective is that, in his experience, the issue has been blown out of proportion and does not merit further scrutiny. However, like many supporters of the #MeToo movement, Molotov disagrees.

Amongst the most controversial songs released by Molotov, “El Carnal de Las Estrellas” aims to expose Televisa’s questionable practices in dealing with employed performers. The track stands as the only completely original song in their second album, *Molomix* (1998), with the rest of the tracks being remixes and a cover of Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody.” The lyrics represent a direct attack on Televisa producers’ Luis de Llano Macedo and Raúl Velasco and speaks of the sexual exploitation present in the acting industry. The title of the song is pun on one of Televisa’s most watched network channels, *El Canal De las Estrellas* (The Channel of the Stars; now renamed simply as Las Estrellas or The Stars). The channel broadcasts *telenovelas*, game shows, news, and sporting events. Molotov’s “carnal” is often thought to be referencing producer Llano, a claim that even he admits is widely believed.<sup>59</sup> Through the lyrics, Molotov delineates the sexual exploitation occurring in the entertainment industry. For example, the chorus states “Este Carnal de las Estrellas/Solo quiere acostarse con ellas” (This Brother of the Stars/Only wants to sleep with them). The first verse of the song describes the craving producers have for the performers they bring to fame, offering a warning to the those wanting to pursue stardom

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<sup>58</sup> Lui De Llano, "Luis De Llano: Sexo, Mentiras Y Medios," *El Heraldo De México*, May 15, 2018, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://heraldodemexico.com.mx/opinion/luis-de-llano-sexo-mentiras-y-medios/>

<sup>59</sup> Olallo Rubio. “Gimme The Power - Documental Completo (Olallo Rubio).” (YouTube video, 1:38:57.September 8, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MoBgwboIs0>) 1:07:40 - 1:07:50



### In Spanish

Si no eres bonita, más bien eres fea  
Quieres volverte una super estrella  
No tienes talento ni una vocación  
Y quieres salir en la televisión  
Que algún productor te lleve a la fama  
Pero antes tendrás que acostarte en su cama  
No necesitas más que una sonrisa  
O ser la exclusiva de Televisa

### English Translation

If you're not beautiful, in fact you're ugly  
And want to become a super star  
You don't have talent or vocation  
And you want to appear on television  
A producer can take you to fame  
But first you will lay on his bed  
You don't need more than a smile  
Or to be exclusive to Televisa

This opening verse alludes to the same problem described by Llano: “talentless” performers receiving special treatment for sleeping with producers. However, while Llano claims this is a problem brought on by actors/actresses willing to sleep with producers, Molotov claims the reality is much different. Molotov warns that producers will grant fame to those actresses willing to sleep with them. Later, the lyrics state that the industry drives performers to undergo surgery to stay within the standard body canon allowed to appear on screen, a practice which can have undesired results on the bodies of celebrities:<sup>60</sup> “Este carnal te opera... te pone las tetas, pero se enoja si no se las prestas/porque te corre, te coge y te veta” (This brother operates on you, gives you boobs, but gets mad if you don't share them/because he will fire you, rape and veto you.) It is alarming to see that this song was released almost twenty years prior to Kate del Castillo's statements on Televisa and yet, the problem seems to persist.

The music video is a grotesque puppet show telling the horror story of a starry-eyed young female doll walking along a fogged up urban street as she sees a sign advertising casting: “TENEBRISA te invita a ser su próxima estrella!!!!” (Sinister/Televisa invites you to be their next star). The ragged doll falls prey to the trap leading her to a mansion where she is taken

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<sup>60</sup> "Gabriela Spanic Y Otras Actrices Mexicanas Que Se Sometieron a Más De Una Cirugía Plástica [FOTOS]," Trome, October 14, 2016, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://trome.pe/espectaculos/celebridades/gabriela-spanic-actrices-mexicanas-sometieron-cirugia-plastica-fotos-26695>.

advantage of by the antagonists of the video: three grotesque puppets, two of them seemingly human with exaggerated features, while the third appears to be a humanoid monster. Though it is not entirely explicit who these puppets represent, it is not a stretch to link them to the antagonists explicitly named in the lyrics: Llano, Velasco, and Televisa itself. Through the video, the antagonists strap the ragged doll and transform her by enlarging her breasts, dying her hair blond, and styling it up. This transformation is presented as a Frankenstein-like tell, where the ragged doll is reconstructed with spare body parts to enlarge her breasts and buttocks, while also raising her now blonde hair. The transformed doll is then taken to a dinner where she is sexually assaulted and eventually eaten as part of the feast. As the ragged doll awakens from a nightmare, she turns her back on what appears to have been nothing more than a haunted home. In the final moment of the video, it is revealed that the antagonists are being controlled by what would appear to be a gargoyle demon. The warning is clear: The Factory of Dreams is a haunted house and those seeking stardom should think twice before entering.

The music accompanying lyrics and video is representative of Molotov's most used style: violent, distorted, and explosive. This style is carried by bassist and vocalist Miguel "Micky" Huidobro, whose voice growls the lyrics out, creating a contorted contrast to Ismael "Tito" Fuentes' cleaner vocalization. Furthermore, the band sings the choruses together creating thick textures akin to the agglutinated atmosphere of the video. As the lyrics are sung between Mickey and Tito and the distorted guitars present a discrepancy with the string instruments in the background, the aesthetic creates an atrocious atmosphere suggesting the horrid landscape of exploitation celebrities describe in Televisa. However, Molotov offers nothing more than discontent and warnings, rather than solutions to the problem of exploitation faced by those seeking to make a career in the entertainment industry. Molotov's song is not very different from

those seen in the Televisa's *telenovelas*. For all the controversy it generated, "El Carnal de las Estrellas," has not created enough backlash to extinguish the practices. In fact, it could be argued that this song is little more than an alternative narrative of entertainment. In this sense, both Televisa and Molotov offer audiences a version of reality, that is not the complete truth. If this is the case, then the question is: what is the value of this performance?

There are several reasons why I believe Molotov's "El Carnal de las Estrellas" to be important. However, the most significant is that they are one of the few popular bands within Mexico who engage Televisa directly. The fact that the lyrics name two producers and Televisa as culprits in the normalization of exploitative practices in the entertainment industry is enough for people to bring such questions up to the producers themselves. For example, Llano has been questioned on whether or not he is the antagonist to celebrities and whether or not he promotes such practices. This is important, because in Mexico, Televisa has shown the ability to silence critics. Molotov have bucked the trend by taking the risk of using their platform to denounce the network publicly, and while their performances do not present solutions, they do encourage others to involve themselves in difficult conversations. Their popularity is, at the very least, proof that Televisa's power is not limitless, and messages of discontent with both the government and the structures that extend its power can reach the masses to give at least one possibility to fight back. As the video to "El Carnal de las Estrellas" ends, the female doll is seen turning her back on Televisa, and perhaps, if more performers did so, this could be the first step towards forcing the network to end exploitation.

## **2.5 Young Dreams of Justice and Journalistic Integrity**

A more subtle form of repression in Televisa's practices comes through news coverage. Because of the high illiteracy rates in Mexico, television plays an important role in informing the

masses on current events. Televisa's far reach and accessibility means many Mexican citizens choose it as their preferred source of news. Though there are plenty of examples of Televisa's unethical journalism, the most important and egregious is the coverage of the 1968 Summer Olympics and the protests that preceded it. Mexico was to host the 1968 Olympic Games and that meant major spending on infrastructure that many saw as ill advised. Protests led by students, who had for years fought for civil rights, erupted with demands. They asked for a disbanding of riot police, loosening of restrictions on assembling, the release of political prisoners, and the confession of officials responsible for the government's violent acts against its people.<sup>61</sup> However, the main discontent was against the use of government funds to accommodate foreign visitors for the sporting event while many Mexican citizens lived in extreme poverty.<sup>62</sup> On October 2nd, 1968, students stood in peaceful protest in the main plaza of Tlatelolco – a historic neighborhood known for its Aztec archeological site, a 17th century Spanish church, and an affordable housing complex all visible from the plaza. However, the protest ended in a massacre directed by government officials lasting over an hour and a half. Later, as news surfaced, Televisa devoted less than five minutes to covering the story and misinformed the public about the severity of the event.<sup>63</sup> While many at the time believed that there were few deaths, some estimate that as many as 400 were killed and over a thousand arrested.<sup>64</sup>

It is through this violent act and journalistic cover up, that the lower class began to realize their actions would be met with severe repression and their voices would go silent on broadcasts.

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<sup>61</sup> William H. Beezley, *Mexico in World History*. (Oxford University Press, 2011), 131

<sup>62</sup> Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches*, 150

<sup>63</sup> 22klon. "Un Imperio De Poder Desde Televisa y TV Azteca - Toda La Verdad Al Descubierto! (Enterate)." *YouTube*, YouTube, 3 June 2012, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9INAP95s4k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9INAP95s4k). 28:05 - 28:20

<sup>64</sup> Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches*, 151

It was also understood that the reporting seen on Televisa was not to be trusted. The government did their part by using their domestic spying programs to prevent journalists from criticizing *el PRI* and the government.<sup>65</sup> Although news of the Tlatelolco massacre proved too important and spread too quickly for Televisa to ignore, coverage emphasized violent acts from students while downplaying the backlash they received.<sup>66</sup> There were alternative forms of journalism in Mexico at the time. Mainly, citizens began attempting to spread their own narrative of events by printing and handing out anti-government pamphlets that reported stories from the protesters' point of view.<sup>67</sup> This tradition of reporting, however, fell short as the mostly illiterate audiences relied on images that were little more than propaganda. However, it is important to note that colloquial speech and imagery was also the form of attack that Molotov deployed, and the reason it was so effective.

“Que no te haga bobo Jacobo” (Don’t let Jacobo Fool You) is the first song in Molotov’s first album, *¿Donde Jugaran Las Niñas?*. The lyrics speak of journalist Jacobo Zabłudovsky and present him as a symbol of misinformation and fact manipulation. Due to Televisa’s unrivalled reach in Mexican airwaves Zabłudovsky, its former lead news anchor of 27 years, is still considered the face of Mexican news. But Zabłudovsky’s fame is not untarnished, as being the face of journalism also means being the face of misinformation and censorship present in the industry. Molotov interprets Zabłudovsky as such and criticizes unethical journalism in Mexico by unmasking him as liar and branding him a traitor in the music video “Que no te haga bobo Jacobo.” While the song acts as a direct attack on Zabłudovsky, Molotov use him as a recognizable symbol to represent all corruption in Mexican news. When Molotov tells

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<sup>65</sup> Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches*, 147

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 158

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 147

Zabludovsky “Maldito Jacobo, chismoso traidor/Le guardas secretos a nuestra nación” (Damned Jacobo, gossiping traitor/You keep secrets from our nation) they are not only criticizing the individual but the industry at large. The music of the song is again in Molotov’s violent, distorted style, including screaming, call and response, loud choruses and a slap bass battle. This creates a furious atmosphere that demonstrates discontent and underscores the lyrics.

Molotov claims that Zabludovsky’s reporting inherently supports *el PRI* and does not give fair coverage to groups protesting against them. Specifically, the line “Te sirves propinas de Carlos Salinas/Transmites en vivo, nos dices pamplinas” (You [Zabludovsky] receive tips from Carlos Salinas/You broadcast live, you tell us lies) directly accuses the then president Carlos Salinas de Gortari (PRI) of handing out bribes to Televisa for coverage that would sway public opinion in his favor. Another line also states “Le tiras pedradas a algunos partido... olvidas noticias sobre la guerrilla” (You throw stones at some [political] parties... you forget news about the guerillas). This time Molotov claims Televisa’s bias against other political parties, and also mentions the lack of coverage given to those that stand against *el PRI*. The guerilla mentioned here alludes to the 1994 rise of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation; EZLN) who fought for the civil rights of indigenous people living in the southernmost regions of Mexico.

The video shows a dystopic version of reality, antithetic to Televisa’s own version. Television sets appear in private as well as public settings. These spaces, along with the characters ranging from a toddler to restaurant goers, reporters, workers, families, and senior citizens, allude to the virtually inescapable reach of corrupt news in Mexico. Everyone seems to be hypnotized by their television sets. Meanwhile, the colors in the video create images similar to those shown in “El Carnal de Las Estrellas” with television screens and food as prominent

themes. Simply put, the video suggests that people are content to sit and watch Televisa as long as they have a meal for the day. The chorus, however, attempts to warn people by repeating “Que no te haga bobo Jacobo.”

## 2.6 Conclusion

In Televisa’s broadcasts, journalism represents more than news reporting; it is a set of instructions. Throughout 1968, Televisa did little to cover the student protesting and instead opted to sympathize with family values by telling its viewers to dissuade their children from protesting. According to journalist Celeste Gonzalez de Bustamante, when Televisa covered protesters, it often referred to them as terrorists.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, as detailed in Gonzalez’ book, *Muy Buenas Noches* (“Good Evening”), during 1968, athletes were the only youths within student-protestor age who received positive coverage from Televisa. The day of the Tlatelolco massacre, Televisa’s news programming opted to exclude the coverage and instead there was “an emphasis on international affairs, sports, and positive images over social unrest at home.”<sup>69</sup> When producers realized the news were too significant to ignore, they mentioned by name the military men who were killed in Tlatelolco, but not the students.<sup>70</sup> A segment from the statement broadcast in Televisa that night read “the secretary of defense made an appeal to the parents of families so that they could prevent their children from attending student activities that could erupt in violence.”<sup>71</sup> This direct quote represents instructions that appeal to family values in order to dissuade youths from protesting.

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<sup>68</sup> Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches*, 162

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 157

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 159-60

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 158

Althusser argues that “Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” and that through behavior “Ideology has a material existence.” I argue that Televisa serves the purpose of spreading the dominant ideology to the masses and of educating them on what proper behavior is. In this line of reasoning, Televisa can be interpreted as an ideological state apparatus within Mexico. It reimagines reality and distributes it to the masses, dictating to them the values mandated by the ruling class. Molotov’s music serves as a point of criticism to their practices, but the band’s videos represent an alternative reality that seeks to uncover Televisa’s corrupt practices. It should be noted that the televised version of “Que no te haga bobo Jacobo” only contained two censored words, namely, a homophobic slur and the name Televisa. As technologies advance, however, protestors are finding alternative ways to spread messages and avoid censorship. An example of such advances is the video-sharing platform YouTube, where a user published a video mixing the song “Que no te haga bobo Jacobo” with real images of civil unrest. The video begins with Subcomandante Marcos, leader of EZLN, stating “Este señor JZ, tenía... prácticamente un poder de información tal que la visión que diera del mundo era visión que tení[an] la mayoría de los mexicanos.” (This man, JZ [Jacobo Zabloudovsky], had such... informative power that the view of the world he gave was the only view for the majority of Mexicans.)<sup>72</sup> This is followed by images of Zabloudovsky and yet another version of reality of Mexican life, but one still accompanied by Molotov’s lyrics. It is interesting that YouTube user Señor X Chido, who uploaded the video to the platform, gives credit to Molotov’s criticism of Televisa, even though he also claims that Molotov have “sold out” to Televisa.

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<sup>72</sup> Señor X Chido. “Molotov - Que No Te Haga Bobo Jacobo (SIN Censura).” YouTube video, July 3 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkGNgodwwzo>



Molotov's relationship with Televisa has not always been strained. Even though the band has consistently attacked the television network, Televisa attempted to cooperate with the Mexican band at least once during 2007. The request came from Televisa Deportes (the sports channel owned by Televisa) which was to record a commercial to promote a new soccer season in Mexico. Molotov, after captivating the attention of Mexicans and having shown passion for the sport, seemed like a good candidate to provide music for the commercial which was to portray analysts, commentators, and celebrities associated with Televisa Deportes. The commercial shows Enrique "El Perro" Bermúdez in a living room waiting for three friends to watch a soccer game. However, dozens show up to create an improvised party with Molotov's music playing in the background.<sup>73</sup> The song, "Ver Golazos", was written specifically for the commercial; in it, Molotov sings, "Si quieres ver golazos, si quieren ver goleada". The lyrics can be translated literally to "If you want to watch great goals, if you want to watch a blowout (of goals)". However, if reinterpreted through *albur*, which will be discussed in the following chapter, the lyrics contain a hidden erotic message. These hidden messages drove Televisa to cancel the airing of the commercial to which Ismael Fuentes, guitarist and vocalist for Molotov, responded "Why invite us if you already know the band?"<sup>74</sup>

Molotov's repertoire is full of music videos such as "Ver Golazos," which seem removed from the dystopian landscapes in the videos analyzed here. Examples include the more ambivalent images present in the music video "Frijolero". This video contains a more colorful landscape than either of those previously mentioned. However, while "Frijolero" attacks American racism, "Que no te haga bobo Jacobo" and "Carnal de las Estrellas" target industries in

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<sup>73</sup> "Extraña a Molotov Censura De Televisa-Deportes." (El Siglo De Torreón, March 13, 2007)  
<https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/258458.extrana-a-molotov-censura-de-televisa-deportes.html>.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

Mexico. The delivery, while crude, must be vague enough to avoid implicating the band, but direct enough for people to grasp the criticism. Such is the case of “Que no te haga bobo Jacobo,” where the band creates a fake television network called MoloTV. The logo for this network is a horizontal yellow circle reminiscent of the yellow sun in Televisa’s logo. I believe these types of productions can attract people long enough to get a message across. In addition, Molotov’s representations of Televisa give viewers uncomfortable scenes that one can’t help but associate with those they criticize. While the band may not be fixing the problems they criticize, I don’t believe it is their responsibility. All Molotov can hope to accomplish is bring awareness to the issues in hopes that discourse stemming from it could create momentum that will finally hold Televisa accountable and force it to handle broadcast in an ethical way.

## CHAPTER III

### HIDDEN EROTICISM:

#### ALBUR MEXICANO AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH

“Pero mientras no nos conquisten nuestra forma de hablar, porque ya nos quitaron todo, namas que no nos quiten nuestra forma de hablar, aun no somos conquistados. Y nuestra lengua es el albur.”<sup>75</sup>

- Lourdes Ruiz Baltazar

#### 3.1 Introduction

Amongst the various themes presented in Molotov’s lyrics, critique against power structures in Mexico and humor are the most frequent. This Mexican band deploys easily understood messages of protest in lyrics directly attacking the government, religions and propaganda news outlets that have aide and/or abet corruption and repression in Mexico. Critics often disregard the band’s humor as vulgarities that offer little more than cheap laughs over taboo topics. It is my argument that Molotov’s humor, if reinterpreted through Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of the carnivalesque, is a rebellious stance transgressing social norms by bringing the culturally unacceptable to the surface. Its lyrics degrade, insult, and ultimately mock power structures and society at large by depicting grotesque characters reduced to their appearance, their basic needs and desires. Uniquely Mexican scenes and stories emerge through controversial language that pushes the scope of freedom of speech to include swearing and even hate speech. However, while the vulgarities in some of Molotov’s lyrics are plain, many more are transgressive messages hidden through clever wordplay.

In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin explores French Renaissance writer Francois Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by reassessing the previously misunderstood text through a

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<sup>75</sup> Les Tres. “Mi Vida es un Albur,” (YouTube video, 50:17, September 23, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnYBS9iojKA>) 7:01-7:20

cultural lens based on the Renaissance tradition of carnival. Bakhtin offers two avenues for evaluating *Gargantua and Pantagruel*: carnivalesque—including free interaction between people otherwise unfamiliar to each other (beggars and kings), folk laughter (where mocking is all encompassing not at the expense of a single individual), and profanities—and grotesque realism—including exaggerated bodies with ambivalent features (young/old, male/female) that always draw attention to its sex and orifices.<sup>76</sup> An important aspect of Bakhtin's carnivalesque theory is the tradition of folk laughter, which recollects a European tradition of resistance towards structures and behavior imposed by the ruling class and religion during Renaissance times. Molotov's humor is similarly explicable as resistance against the socio-cultural rigidity found within Mexico. The most explicit example of Molotov's resistance-oriented humor is the band's use of *albur* as a source of lyrical<sup>77</sup> production for their music.

### **3.2 *Albur*: Erotic Freedom of Speech**

Popular in Mexico, *albur* is a game in which two opponents take turns at attempting to outwit each other through improvisational sexual wordplay full of ambiguity and double entendre. *Albur* has virtually infiltrated all aspects of everyday life in Mexico. One can find *albur* practiced in open spaces such as markets, stadiums, and city squares, and close spaces such as bars, factories, and locker rooms.<sup>78</sup> There are poems, games, and even festivals dedicated to *albur* and the practice has garnered wide-ranging attention from ordinary people to politicians, academics, and artists.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, with the rise of new media during the 20th century, *albur*

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<sup>76</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. "Introduction." Translated by Helene Iswolsky. In *Rabelais and his World*, 1-58. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984)

<sup>77</sup> I use the terms 'lyric' and 'lyricism' strictly in reference to structured words set to music. "Lyrics" refers the words themselves, while 'lyricism' implies the nuanced messages found within 'lyrics.'

<sup>78</sup> Helena Beristáin. "El albur." *Acta Poética* 21, no. 1-2. (Red Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México 2000), 399-400.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

has found expressive avenues in Mexican radio, television, billboards and the internet. In fact, in Mexico, *albur* is so common that Mexicans have coined a verb (*alburear*) for the practice, as well as the nouns (*alburera* or *alburero*) for people who partake in this style of humor.<sup>80</sup>

Historian Patrick Johansson suggests that an early form of what is now recognized as *albur* was present during the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the erotic songs of the Nahuas, the main indigenous group who inhabited Mexico during the Spanish conquest and whose language survives in the country to this day. Johansson argues that eroticism was an integral part of Nahua culture: Nahua rituals, including song and dance, articulated the erotic part of life in order to “re-energize the cosmos.”<sup>81</sup> Johansson points to ambiguity and double meaning (also found in *albur*) in some Nahua song and dance genres he analyzes as an integral part of lyrical composition.<sup>82</sup> He explains that elements of these songs survived through the Catholic Church’s strategic appropriation of folk practices to attract and convert indigenous people and to reform their spiritual traditions and beliefs. This appropriation offered two possible interpretations for the continuation of the Nahua erotic tradition. In the first, the Catholic Church may have underestimated the lewdness of the ambiguous lyrics; and in the second, it may have underestimated the cleverness of the natives who helped bring these songs to Catholic mass.<sup>83</sup> While the first was possibly a misunderstanding or ignorance of the intricacies of the Nahua language, the second suggests native informants in their subjected status attempted to empower themselves by finding a “joyous and ingenious way of manifesting their eroticism through *albur*, and taking subtle revenge.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Beristáin. "El albur." 400

<sup>81</sup> Patrick Johansson. “*Dilogía, metáforas y albures en cantos eróticos nahuas del siglo XVI.*” (Revista de Literaturas Populares VI-1. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2006) 63

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

In the above context, *albur* can be interpreted as a Nahua tool of protest against the Church-mandated repression of eroticism which continues to exert power over Mexican culture today. This repression is clear in the gender roles imposed on Mexican women. As anthropologist Patricia Zavella discusses, the Church repressed the erotic desires of women brought up in the Mexican gendered tradition by making “Church-sanctified marriage” the only acceptable context for their sexual pleasure.<sup>85</sup> Zavella also explains that by simply breaking their silence on eroticism, women of Mexican heritage who express their bodily desires are seen as transgressors shamed by their peers, notwithstanding how empowered this expression of desire might make the women feel.<sup>86</sup> However, Zavella’s focus is on a direct sexual discourse and not the kind of speech act loaded with poly-semantic subtleties typical of *albur*. The fact is that, against the Catholic Church’s continued repression of women’s erotic desire, *albur* continues to give these censored utterances a way into public spaces.

Lourdes Ruiz Baltazar, also known as La Reina del *albur*<sup>87</sup> (The Queen of albur) is a superb example of how the speech style offers avenues for women to defy censors publicly. La Reina del *albur* was born, raised and continues to work in Tepito, one of Mexico City’s most notorious neighborhoods, known for its cultural significance as a highly patronized market and for the dangers posed by its high crime rate. In *Mi Vida es un Albur* (My Life is an Albur), a documentary film dedicated to her life, Ruiz explains that growing up in Mexico requires finding ways to navigate what can or cannot be said; for her, the obvious answer is *albur*. She recalls that as a child she suffered abuse from parents who attempted to control her manner of speaking,

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<sup>85</sup> Patricia Zavella, “Talkin’ Sex: Chicanas and Mexicanas theorize about silences and sexual pleasures,” In *Chicana Feminisms: a critical reader*, edited by Gabriela F. Arredondo (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 228.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> This title was bestowed upon her by the judges of the 1997 Museum of the City of Mexico’s *albur* competition “Trompos contra Pirinolas” (Spinning top against Spinning top; both “trompo” and “pirinola” implying erotic connotations).

often by washing her mouth with soap as a punishment for swearing. This compelled her to seek different modes of expression.<sup>88</sup> Eventually she learnt *albur* in the streets of Tepito and turned her wit and dedication to the language into a stance against remnants of colonial control. Ruiz notes that *albur* offered her the opportunity to speak publicly, even if not explicitly, about the things on which society expects women to stay silenced. She believes that so long as *albur* survives, the Mexican people have not truly been conquered.<sup>89</sup> In her words, which I have quoted in Spanish as the epigraph for this chapter, she describes *albur* as a Mexican linguistic bastion against subjugation: “Unless they conquer the way we speak, because they already took everything [else] from us, but if they don’t take the way we speak, we are not conquered. And our language is *albur*.”<sup>90</sup>

### 3.3 *Albur* Defined and Present-day Use

Although it serves similar purposes today, the *albur* that people such as Ruiz practice is different from the expressive practices that Johansson observed in erotic Nahua traditions. *Albur*, as it exists today, is an intricate interaction that no longer happens only through song but may occur as improvisations of verbal art within everyday conversations or within the dictates of prescribed topics and contest rules that guide *albur* competitions. Whether in everyday life or as a competitive cultural performance, the practice involves two people attempting to outwit each other by creating and verbalizing an original double entendre on an ongoing or agreed-upon topic of conversation. The purpose of this verbal battle is to make one’s double entendre so witty and humorous that the opponent cannot respond in kind. In competitive *albur*, the rules are more formal. *Excélsior*, a daily newspaper in Mexico City, reported that it is common in the rules of

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<sup>88</sup> Les Tres. “Mi Vida es un Albur,” 14:10-15:00

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:01-7:20

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

*albur* for a verbal combatant to receive points for uttering original humorous responses on a prescribed topic and for doing so within five seconds of the opponent's final word. Penalties in the form of point deductions and instant disqualification may apply when responses lack wit (or are in poor taste) or explicitly use vulgar words.<sup>91</sup> While rules vary between competitions, a ban on explicit vulgarities appears to be commonplace. Ruiz explains that *albur* is meant to be a fine art, often calling it *albur fino*, devoid of insult and coarse language, and that this is not meant to satisfy censors, but to challenge participants to verbal dexterity and listeners to decode the hidden dialogue of the expression.<sup>92</sup>

Helena Beristáin argues that in order to understand *albur* it is not enough to have dictionary translations of what is said in the practice. One also needs to understand the linguistic system and structure within which practitioners use the double entendres;<sup>93</sup> the subject matter of which is always pointing to the body and sex.<sup>94</sup> It is this obsession with sexual double entendre that makes *albur* similar to "that's what she said" jokes popularized in the U.S. through television shows such as *Family Guy* and *The Office*. A significant difference is that while the double entendres of "that's what she said" humor are often unintended, *albureros* are clearly intentional in every double entendre they use. In everyday speech, a conversation may subtly (and thus surprisingly) transform into a game of *albur* as participants reply with escalating sexualized responses on the topic of the ongoing conversation. Beristáin contextualizes the roots of *albur* amongst the working class and in the markets of Mexico.<sup>95</sup> It should be stressed that exactly because *albur* makes its appearance in everyday speech and because its element of

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<sup>91</sup> "Realizaron En Pachuca El Festival De Albures," *Excélsior*, August 21, 2013, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2013/08/20/914507>.

<sup>92</sup> Les Tres. "Mi Vida es un Albur," 8:34-9:07

<sup>93</sup> Helena Beristáin. "El albur." *Acta Poética* 21, no. 1-2., 401

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 404

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 368



surprise is in its subtleties, the observer/listener who is not attuned to working class and market experiences and sensibilities may naively confuse it with normal speech.

*Albur* transforms language through the use of two linguistic elements. The first hides double entendre through the use of homophones or words with phonetic similarity. Homophonic words such as *bienes* (meaning “goods” or “merchandise” but also “good happenings”) and *viene*s (a conjugation of the verb *venir* ‘to come’, alluding to orgasmic climax) have the power to change the context of what is being said from innocent to erotic. Phonetic similarity arising from a speaker’s manipulation of the space between spoken words, also aids in semantic differences. By playing with listeners interpretation of the end of one word and start of the next, the *alburero/a* finds moments for hidden words to emerge. Through manipulation of vocal space, the *alburero/a* can transform the meaning of a request such as “Dame la hora” (give me the time) to imply the erotic “Damela ahora” (give it to me now). Similarly, “*Entre tu arte y mi arte, yo prefiero mi arte*” (between your art and my art, I prefer my art) might have the final sentence clause transformed into “yo prefiero miarte” or “I prefer pissing on you” (*miarte* is a slang pronunciation of *mearte* or “piss on you”). Because these examples are based on phonetic recognition, a gifted *alburero/a* may emphasize words that are important for the double entendre to emerge. However, he/she may also choose not to do so to test or prevent the listeners from recognizing the *albur*.

I noted earlier that in *albur* there is a tradition of constantly engaging in wordplay focused on the body and especially genitalia. Thus, the messages conveyed during such interactions must always be interpreted through a sexual lens. It is from this focus on sex that the second linguistic element derives. In *albur* the listener must recognize the sexual alternatives of

polysemic of words and slang in order to understand the double entendre. For instance, the following appears to be innocent conversation between a taxi driver and passenger:

Driver: “*Donde la parada?*” (where is the stop?)

Passenger: “*Hasta el tope*” (to the speed bump)

The underlined words exemplify *albur*’s sexual polysemy. In Spanish, *parada* means stop and erection. The driver is simultaneously asking “where is your stop?” and “where do you want the erection?” The passenger’s response is returned in kind: *tope* means “speed bump” as well as “top”. The passenger simultaneously replies “all the way to the speed bump” and “all the way to the top.” Ambivalent words such as these are frequently featured in *albur* and make it difficult for listeners to tell whether or not the humorous wordplay is present. This ambivalence is, at the same time, what is required for an interaction to be considered *albur*. In other words, the practice of *albur* is not accomplished through simple erotic insertions, but rather, it is achieved by hiding them through double entendres that emerge organically from the topic under discussion. In fact, failing to recognize *albur* can brand one as an outsider. In our example, if the passenger does not respond within the rules of *albur*, the driver may perceive the passenger as an outsider due to their lack of cultural knowledge. This could potentially result in the driver taking the opportunity to raise the fare.

### **3.4 Molotov’s Freedom of Speech**

As I stated earlier, the band Molotov adopts the transgressive *albur* tradition in its music. This use begins with the band’s lyrics. There are many examples of *albur* throughout Molotov’s music; in fact, each album contains at least one song that exemplifies this practice. When it comes to homophonic *albur*, songs such as “Changüich a la Chichona” (Sandwich for the Girl

with Big Boobs), “Rap, Soda y Bohemia” (Rap, Soda and Bohemian) and “E. Charles White,” offer the clearest examples of Molotov’s use of the tradition.

Found in Molotov’s 2003 album *Dance and Dense Denso*, “Changüich a la Chichona” is an example of the band’s carnivalesque style of humor. The comedic lyrics of the song reduce the body to its base desires and needs: sex and consumption. The lyrics describe a craving for food common in the streets of Mexico, such as tacos and chorizo, for American fast food from Kentucky Fried Chicken, Wendy’s, and McDonald’s, and the like, and for other foods that have gained popularity worldwide, such as sushi and hamburgers. Like any *albur* worthy of the name, Molotov’s double meaning revolves around sex. A homophonic example can be heard in the lyric “sushilito no la llena” (the small sushi does not fill her up).<sup>96</sup> In this example “sushilito” (little sushi) sounds like the phonetically similar “su chilito” (his little pepper; euphemism for male genitalia), thus changing the reference of unsatisfied appetite from hunger to sex.

In “Rap, Soda y Bohemia,” Molotov’s musical parody of Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody” from their 1998 remix album *Molomix*, the band uses another form of phonetic *albur* to create an alternative version of the story in Queen’s original lyrics. Queen’s protagonist describes the anguish of having killed a man, and Molotov describes a similar murder. However, in the parody, the lyrics not only glorify the act of killing, but also introduce sexual themes through *albur*. In the opening verse of “Rap, Soda y Bohemia” Molotov’s protagonist stutters, “Mama, ma-mate un cabron” (Mama, I ki-killed a dumbass). In this instance, the key element of the *albur* is the stutter in “ma-mate.” If removed, it leaves behind “maté” (I killed); however, if interpreted as part of the word, not a stutter, we hear “mamate” (go suck on). In this way, the *albur* changes

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<sup>96</sup> Molotov. “Chandwich A La Chichona - Molotov.” (Google Play Music. Accessed December 11, 2017. [https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tsbox7uqzjv3zd2c4kcndt7sf6i?lyrics=1&utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=search&utm\\_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-lyrics&u=0#](https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tsbox7uqzjv3zd2c4kcndt7sf6i?lyrics=1&utm_source=google&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-lyrics&u=0#).)

the meaning of the protagonist's words from the confessional "Mama, I ki-killed a dumbass" to the obscene "Mama, go suck on a dumbass,".

"E. Charles White" not only offers an example of Molotov's *albur* but also gives insight into the band's use of English and code-switching as a source of wordplay. The song begins with a phone call from a fictional producer telling the band they need to write a socially meaningful song. The band responds with the chorus: "E. Charles White is in the house." While the singer/s pronounce "White is in the house" in English, they pronounce "E. Charles" in Spanish. This is key to how the *albur* is constructed: "E. Charles" phonetically resembles "echarles" (throw at them). In this instance, the band uses *albur* to change the English name "E. Charles White" into "echarles white" (throw white on them; referencing semen). This song has another example of *albur* through phonetic resignification in the lyric "Alma Marcela Silva de Alegre." In Mexico, as in many other Latin American countries, "Alma" and "Marcela" are common first/middle names, while "Silva" and "Alegre" are common last names and "de" (of) a common preposition found between last names (usually denoting a surname acquired through marriage). However, phonetically, Molotov's "Alma Marcela Silva de Alegre" sounds as "al mamarcela silba de alegre" (while sucking on it, he/she whistles of happiness).

Both "Changüich a la Chichona" and "E. Charles White" also include instances of polysemic *albur*. In "Changüich a la Chichona," the lyric "Ella quiere un King de polla" (She wants a Burger King [often referred to as 'King' in Mexico] of chicken) can be reinterpreted differently upon the understanding that "polla" simultaneously means "chicken" and "penis." As previously mentioned, in "E. Charles White," the double entendre is in the meaning of white as a color in general, and its specific lewd reference to the semen. In fact, gifted *albureros/os* rarely rely only on polysemic or polyphonic wordplay exclusively and often combine both. In

“Changüich a la Chichona,” both polysemic and phonic forms of *albur* are present in the lyric “traele un trio de Mac a Anita” (bring a trio of McDonald's [often referred to as Mac] to Anita).<sup>97</sup> In this example, the phonetic *albur* occurs in the similarity between “Mac a Anita” and “macanita” (little police baton). However, one needs to make the polysemic connection between a police baton and its sexual connotation—a penis—in order to fully understand this *albur*.

“Changüich a la Chichona” also illustrates the connection between Molotov’s use of both Spanish and English lyrics and their practice of *albur*. In the song, the band’s American-born drummer, Randy Ebright, raps in English and creates humor in a manner quite like polysemic *albur*. His lyrics follow a common practice of constructing sexual double entendre through references to food. Perhaps the most explicit example of this is the final two lines in English: “‘Cause I’ve tried to pry a bearded clam that would not budge/So I went around the corner to keep on trying and I got a little fudge.”<sup>98</sup> While the literal meaning of these lyrics describes his craving for seafood, and his eventual decision to settle for dessert at a different restaurant, the polysemy of “bearded clam” (also a reference to female genitalia) and “fudge” (also a reference to excrement), transforms the meaning of the lyric from the choice of dessert over seafood to settling for anal intercourse upon the decline of vaginal penetration.

*Albur* has become a staple of Molotov’s music not only as a source of humor, but also as a means to bypass censorship because the actual erotic messages in Molotov’s songs are often too explicit to get playtime on either radio or television. An interesting example of their attempt to bypass censorship is their failed collaboration with the sports division of Televisa described in Chapter II, section 2.6. In 2007, Televisa Deportes hired Molotov to write a song for a

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<sup>97</sup> Molotov. “Chandwich A La Chichona - Molotov.”

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

commercial promoting the upcoming soccer season. In the commercial, Televisa Deportes' sports analysts and commentators are seen having an improvised soccer-watching party as Molotov's music plays in the background with the lyrics "Si quieres ver golazos, si quieres ver goleada" (If you want to watch great goals, if you want to watch a blowout [of goals]). However, the lyrics had a hidden message masked with phonetic *albur*: "ver golazos" and "ver goleada," when connected as "vergolazos" and "vergoleada," allude to the Spanish word "verga" (cock). Those attuned to the nuances of *albur* can hear Molotov singing about soccer goals and, simultaneously hear it saying, "if you want a fucking." When made aware of the double entendre, Televisa cancelled the airing of the commercial.<sup>99</sup>

There are several ways in which Molotov's use of *albur* in its lyrics differs from the practice elsewhere in Mexico. One deviation from *albur* is that the band uses language that is too coarse to be considered part of the tradition of *albur fino*, defined by Ruiz as being devoid of vulgar language.<sup>100</sup> An example of this coarse language is the lyric "Your titties are smelling like chocolate chip ice cream/And I think I want to lick' em."<sup>101</sup> As previously mentioned, Explicitly referencing breasts as 'titties' is not acceptable in *albur fino* and is grounds for disqualification in competitions, but the practice is commonplace in Molotov's lyrics. Songs such as "Rastamandita," "Queremos Pastel" (We Want Cake), and "Quitate Que Me Estrubas" (Leave Me, You're a Bother), all contain traditional *albur* alongside more explicit sexual messages or less acceptable forms of insults, such as swearing. This not only transgresses against the Catholic Church's repression of standards of speech, but also against the traditional *albur* principle that curse words ought to be absent within the code.

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<sup>99</sup> "Extraña a Molotov Censura De Televisa-Deportes." (El Siglo De Torreón, March 13, 2007)

<https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/258458.extrana-a-molotov-censura-de-televisa-deportes.html>.

<sup>100</sup> Les Tres. "Mi Vida es un Albur," 8:37-9:00

<sup>101</sup> Molotov. "Chandwich A La Chichona - Molotov."

Another deviation is that Molotov's *albur* is not a two-way conversation and listeners have almost no opportunity to respond, because it occurs in recorded or a presentational concert music. Beristáin explains that true *albur* requires opponents and judges. Her analysis presents *albur* as a negotiation of power between speakers who seek victory by silencing antagonists.<sup>102</sup> Molotov performances allow the audiences to listen in, and even recite the lyrics, but they are ultimately silenced, without an opportunity to take part in power negotiations. Though this silencing leaves Molotov as the sole provider of the mockery present in their music, the band does not exempt itself from the receiving end of the mockery. The band's songs such as "Puto" (Faggot), "Apocalypshit" and "Yofo" (Me)<sup>103</sup> have instances of self-mockery. Other Molotov songs, such as "Amateur," "Hasta La Basura Se Separa" (Even Trash Falls Apart) and "Lagunas Metales" (Metal Lagoons—a play on 'lagunas mentales,' or mental lapses/blackouts, synonymous with amnesia), create humor by mocking the band's music, economic struggles, lackluster performances, and advancing age.

In his introduction to *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin separates carnival humor into three forms: "ritual spectacles," "comic verbal compositions," and "various genres of billingsgate."<sup>104</sup> While few Molotov songs – such as "El Carnal de las Estrellas" (Brother of the Stars), discussed in the previous chapter – allude to ritualistic spectacles, "comic verbal compositions" and "various genres of billingsgate" are a distinctive staple of Molotov's lyrical repertoire. The band's use of "comic verbal compositions" has created controversy for its

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<sup>102</sup> Helena Beristáin. "El albur." *Acta Poética* 21, no. 1-2. (Red Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México 2000), 410

<sup>103</sup> 'Yofo' derives from a form of a Mexican coded language based on the letter 'f.' In this form of speech, every syllable in a statement is repeated with the first consonant replaced by 'f.' The word 'yo' (me) is transformed into 'yofo.' In a similar way, 'tu' (you) would be 'tufu' and 'nosotros' (us) would be 'nofosofotrofos,' where the final consonant of the last syllable is placed only at the end of its 'f' repetition.

<sup>104</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. "Introduction." Translated by Helene Iswolsky. In *Rabelais and his World*, 1-58. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 5.

eroticism, but it is Molotov's transgressive lyrical approach, built on billingsgate (Bakhtin explains this as "curses, oaths, popular blazons"), that has generated the most negative responses, especially from LGBT rights activists.<sup>105</sup> Bakhtin explains that between people in friendly relationships, billingsgate is a form of camaraderie in which interlocutors drop formality and introduce abusive words in seemingly affectionate ways that invite mutual mockery.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, speech in which mockery is an essential part of humor is present throughout Molotov's oeuvre. However, even when these songs include the band itself in the mockery, their coarse language remains a point of contention.

### 3.5 Billingsgate and the Word *Puto*

Billingsgate style lyrics were present in Molotov's in their first album, *¿Dónde Jugarán las Niñas?* (Where will the little girls play?). One example from this album is the song "Puto." Although the song received criticism for its explicitness and its repetition of the homophobic slur *puto* forty times and similar slurs, such as *putín*, *maricon*, and *marica* four times, it remains present in the music that the band performs and records, as evident in its 2018 live "unplugged" album *El Desconecte* (The Disconnection). Continued pressure from U.S.-based LGBT activist groups had previously pushed Molotov to defend the lyrics of "Puto," with the claim that its intended message is not homophobic, but a stance against the cowardice some Mexicans show when they remain complacent to the country's corrupt systems.<sup>107</sup> However, the violent attack on Chilean gay youth Esteban Navarro, who suffered injuries resulting in the amputation of his leg, motivated the band to remove the lyrics "Matarile al maricon" (death to the faggot) as a sign of

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<sup>105</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. "Introduction," 5

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 16

<sup>107</sup> Monika Fabian, "Molotov's Hollow Gesture of Solidarity After 'Puto' Controversy," ABC News, August 08, 2013, accessed June 03, 2019, [https://abcnews.go.com/ABC\\_Univision/Opinion/molotovs-hollow-gesture-solidarity-puto-controversy/story?id=19904640](https://abcnews.go.com/ABC_Univision/Opinion/molotovs-hollow-gesture-solidarity-puto-controversy/story?id=19904640).



solidarity with Navarro. Some people saw this as a gesture of solidarity with gay-rights activists at large,<sup>108</sup> but band members claim gay-rights activists did not sway their decision.<sup>109</sup> In any case, the word *puto* remains in the lyrics, and Molotov claims of no homophobic intent appear to be echoed in certain segments of the Mexican public.

In recent years, and under international pressure, the Federación Mexicana de Fútbol (Mexican Football Association or FMF) has battled to abolish the word *puto* from the chants used by Mexican soccer fans. This controversy began as fans mocking of the opposing teams' goalkeepers. Whenever the opposition's goalkeeper prepared to kick the ball, fans would build a feeling of intensity throughout the stadium by lifting their hands towards the goalkeeper and loudly chanting a prolonged 'ehhh'. This would invite surrounding fans to join in as the chant crescendos in the stadium, culminating in the shout of *puto* when the goalkeeper made contact with the ball. Over the last decade, this chant gained popularity with Mexican fans and became a staple of their games. However, once the fans began to do the chant outside Mexico at the international level of game, FMF's pressure to abolish the tradition grew.<sup>110</sup> Mexican soccer fans and analysts claiming, just as Molotov had done, that *puto* carries connotations unrelated to homophobia and that FMF's interest in ridding stadiums of the chant were motivated primarily by the hefty fines mandated by the world soccer organizing body, Fédération Internationale de Football Association (International Federation of Associated Football or FIFA), and the latter's

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<sup>108</sup> Megan Townsend, "Mexican Rock Band Molotov to Remove Anti-gay Slur from Track, Speak out against Anti-LGBT Violence during National Tour," GLAAD, July 31, 2013, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://www.glaad.org/blog/mexican-rock-band-molotov-remove-anti-gay-slur-track-speak-out-against-anti-lgbt-violence>.

<sup>109</sup> Canal Claro. "Tito Fuentes y Paco Ayala de Molotov abrieron La Caja de Pandora," (YouTube video, 25:17, January 12, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzkWeHpZOgI>) 18:35-18:42

<sup>110</sup> Mónica Cruz, "Por Qué No Se Puede Gritar 'puto' En Los Estadios Sin Ofender," Verne, June 21, 2017, , accessed June 03, 2019, [https://verne.elpais.com/verne/2016/06/20/mexico/1466380835\\_717460.html](https://verne.elpais.com/verne/2016/06/20/mexico/1466380835_717460.html).

threats to bar spectators from Mexican soccer games, negate Mexico's victories and cancel games – each with economic consequences.

Mexican soccer fans saw FIFA fines as a hypocritical abuse of power, since the federation attempted to clamp on homophobia at their events while at the same time granting an LGBTQ-repressive regime such as Russia the honor of hosting the games in 2018. If FIFA's threats of sanctions against Mexico's national soccer team were made in an attempt to show world-wide solidarity with gay-rights activists by creating opposition against Mexican fans' homophobic chants, their decision to approve Russia as a host nation did not show the same conviction. Mexico does appear to be a more dangerous place than Russia for LGBTQ people, since while the murder rate of LGBTQ people is similar in both countries, in Mexico it has been reached in a shorter time span.<sup>111</sup> However, while Russia's overall murder rate dropped steadily between 2013 and 2017, its hate crimes against LGBTQ people have nearly doubled. In Mexico murder rates have risen while the percentage of hate crimes against LGBTQ people have remained stable.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, while Russia has introduced laws that limit the rights of LGBTQ community members, Mexico has taken actions to secure the rights of the LGBTQ community.<sup>113 114</sup> For example, Russia banned same sex relations in 2013. Thereafter and up to

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<sup>111</sup> The Mexican LGBTQ community lost 202 (by conservative estimates) members to murder between 2014 and 2016. However, the Russian one lost 200 of its members to murder between 2013 and 2017. Furthermore, Mexico's rate of hate crimes against LGBTQ people represents 0.4% of total crimes committed, compared to Russia's 0.3%. While, Russia registered over 57,000 murders between a span of five years, Mexico registered over 56,000 in three years.

<sup>112</sup> Christina Maxouris and Natalie Gallón, "Mexico Sets Record with More than 33,000 Homicides in 2018," CNN, January 22, 2019, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/01/22/americas/mexico-murder-rate-2018/index.html>.

<sup>113</sup> In 2003, Mexico passed laws to protect LGBTQ rights to employment, provision of goods and services, and to criminalize indirect discrimination and hate speech; while Russia has no such protections. Marriage between same sex couples has been accepted as law in 13 Mexican states, with 13 others having recently elected MORENA as a majority in legislative chambers, seen by many as a push towards LGBTQ rights protection.

<sup>114</sup> Caroline Beer and Victor Cruz-Aceves, "Mexico's LGBT Rights Are Stronger than the US's. Here's Why," World Economic Forum, April 26, 2018, accessed June 03, 2019,

2017, hate crimes spiked against the LGBTQ communities in the country.<sup>115 116</sup> According to Svetlana Zakharova of the Russian LGBT Network, “It seems to [perpetrators] that, to some extent, the government supports their actions. In fact, many perpetrators openly talk about their crimes as noble deeds.”<sup>117</sup> Therefore, if FIFA’s opposition to the Mexican fans homophobic chants was a demonstration of world-wide solidarity with gay-rights activists, its decision to approve Russia as host nation flew in the face of that demonstration.

Mexican soccer fans replied to FMF and FIFA with their own campaign to show the versatility of the word, claiming that its various vernacular uses in Mexico exceed homophobic ones. An image, circulated on social media by supporters of the chant, shows different ways in which Mexicans use the word colloquially, eg. “Que puto calor hace” (It’s fucking hot), “Que buen putazo se dio ese wey” (That dude hit himself hard) and “Que puto gusto verte” (It’s fucking great to see you).<sup>118</sup> The image ends with the hashtag #TodosSomosPuto (We are all *putos*). This campaign did not create a significant change in how *puto* is perceived. Mónica Ruiz of the global Spanish newspaper *El País* explains that even though dictionaries have several definitions for the word, the homophobic meaning is usually cited as its origin.<sup>119</sup> For Ruiz, the issue is not the various definitions of the word, but that the original meaning attaches itself to new ones to create the controversy. Soccer fans’ new meanings still have several negative

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<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/religion-the-state-and-the-states-explain-why-mexico-has-stronger-lgbt-rights-than-the-us>.

<sup>115</sup> Andy Harvey, "World Cup: Russia Isn't Safe for LGBT Fans, and Qatar 2022 Will Be Worse," *The Conversation*, July 10, 2018, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://theconversation.com/world-cup-russia-isnt-safe-for-lgbt-fans-and-qatar-2022-will-be-worse-99540>.

<sup>116</sup> Analysis by the Center for Independent Social Research attributes the spike to the 2013 ban.

<sup>117</sup> Daria Litvinova, "LGBT Hate Crimes Double in Russia after Ban on 'gay Propaganda'," *Reuters*, November 21, 2017, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-lgbt-crime/lgbt-hate-crimes-double-in-russia-after-ban-on-gay-propaganda-idUSKBN1DL2FM>.

<sup>118</sup> Cruz, "Por Qué No Se Puede Gritar 'puto' En Los Estadios Sin Ofender."

<sup>119</sup> Cruz, "Por Qué No Se Puede Gritar 'puto' En Los Estadios Sin Ofender."

connotations, especially when used to mock an opposing team member. Ruiz and gay rights activists' argument is that this negativity gets associated with homosexuality and directed towards the gay community. Molotov inserted itself into the conversation by putting the following message on their official Facebook page as a response to FIFA: "Before perpetrating a decision against a national team, we ask you to investigate. We present the definition of the expression 'Puto'."<sup>120</sup> The band follows this statement with the opening verse of the song "Puto" formatted as dictionary definitions.

Although the song "Puto" contains humor, its message is one of discontent towards the government and those too afraid to speak out against corruption and misinformation. The song begins with a band member beatboxing, followed by guitarist and vocalist Fuentes rapping.

**In Spanish**

Que muy machín, ¿no?  
Ah, muy machín, ¿no?  
Marica nena  
Más bien putín, ¿no?

**English Translation**

What, very brave, no?  
Ah, very brave, no?  
Faggot baby  
More gay, no?

Fuentes repeats this intro twice before joining the rest of the band for two more repetitions of the chant *puto*. The intensity of the chant builds up to the start of the first verse, culminating once again in a repeated shout of *puto*. Fuentes delivers these lines to listeners as definitions:

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<sup>120</sup> "Molotov Educa a La FIFA Sobre "puto,"" SDPnoticias.com, June 20, 2014, accessed June 03, 2019, <https://www.sdpnoticias.com/gay/2014/06/20/molotov-educa-a-la-fifa-sobre-puto>.

### In Spanish

### English Translation

(¡Puto!) El que no brinque, el que no salte	(Fag!) The one who doesn't romp, or jumps
(¡Puto!) El que no grite eche un desmadre	(Fag!) The one who doesn't scream and fucks around
(¡Puto!) El güey que quedó conforme	(Fag!) The dude that conforms
(¡Puto!) El que creyó lo del informe	(Fag!) The one who believed the reports
(¡Puto!) El que nos quita la papa	(Fag!) The one who takes our potato (food)
(¡Puto!) También todo el que lo tapa	(Fag!) Also the one who covers it up
(¡Puto!) El que no hace lo que quiere	(Fag!) The one who doesn't do what he wants
(¡Puto!) Puto nace y puto se muere	(Fag!) Born a fag and dies a fag

While Molotov has removed the use of the word *maricón* from their song “Puto,” I have personally witnessed it yelled by the audience during a live performance by the band (*La Tocada* Latin rock festival, Los Angeles, August, 2018). During the band’s opening for “Puto,” audience members jumped, pushed against each other, and ran in circles. When the lyrics began, the audience chanted along with the band. I wondered, “will the band utter words they claim to have banned from their own performances?” To my surprise, they physically distanced themselves from the microphones at the point that they usually sing *maricon*. However, the audience made sure to shout it out. I must admit that in the moment, under the summer sun of midday L.A., surrounded by the bodies dancing to the beat of “Puto,” covered in my own sweat and the flying dust from the mosh pit, and intoxicated by the authority of the powerful performance produced by all those present, I too sang along.

Given what I saw at the concert, it is difficult for me to imagine that Molotov’s removal of the words during live performances has much positive social effect. There are several reasons for this, but the most important seems to be the words they leave out of other songs. In the recording of *El Desconecte* Molotov performs a new version of their political protest anthem “Gimme tha Power.” This new version is played faster and the choruses include a give-and-take

between the band's members which is absent from its original recording. Through the live unplugged version of "Gimme tha Power," the audience can be heard singing along. There are moments in the lyrics in which the audience can be heard over the band's singing. An example of this are the lyrics "Si le das más poder al poder/Más duro te van a venir a coger" (If you give more power to the power/They will come screw you harder) and "Porque fuimos potencia mundial/Somos pobres, nos manejan mal" (We were a world power/We are poor, poorly managed). In both these instances, the audience can be heard singing the consequent of both lines, "Mas duro te van a venir a coger" and "Somos pobres, nos manejan mal." However, Molotov sings while the crowd fluctuates intensity depending on the lyrics. Later in the song, the band stops halfway through what is easily the most recognizable lyric in the song, "Si nos pintan como a unos huevones/No lo somos, ¡Viva Mexico, cabrones!" (If they paint us as lazy/We aren't, long live Mexico, assholes!). The band stop singing after "No lo somos" to invite the crowd to yell back "¡Viva Mexico, cabrones!" This invitation seems to place more importance to the lyric and audience reacts by belting it out. However, could the same not be said for the song "Puto"? If the band stops mid song, could the crowd interpret this as an invitation to take part in performance and similarly belt out the band's omitted words? If this is the case, Molotov's attempt to stand in solidarity with gay-rights activist by removing words from their live performances would appear to have the opposite effect.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

So what then is the value of Molotov's vulgar language? It is important to note two things from their profane lyrics. First, if Ruiz is correct in placing language and manner of speaking as a form of self-liberation and protection of identity, Molotov's words must be attributed to the bodies they give voice to. As exemplified by the soccer fans' chanting of *puto*, their use of the

word aligns with members of the Mexican community at large. And while many are attempting to remove this word from the Mexican vocabulary, Molotov continues to give people a space where they may use it freely. Second, and most importantly, Molotov's use of profane language has also sparked countless iterations of a discourse on the validity of vulgar language. This comes in the form of criticism of the band and interviews in which Molotov is asked to justify their offensive lyrics. Though Molotov's answers may not placate gay-rights activists, these same answers give users of similar vulgar language, such as Mexican soccer fans, the tools to defend their manner of speaking.

I do not believe that Molotov have homophobic intentions when it comes to the use of words such as *puto*; however, while there are varying interpretations for what *puto* actually means, it cannot be ignored that it is rooted in homophobia. Throughout Molotov's entire oeuvre there are other songs that contain messages which can be interpreted as homophobic, such as "Chinga Tu Madre" (Fuck Off), and many songs which align themselves with rights for all, such as "La Raza Pura es la Pura Raza" (The Pure Race is the Entire Race). But most of these songs are ignored by gay-rights activists, as they are not as popular as "Puto" and the reach of their messages are limited. It is important to note that songs that speak of rights for all sexualities are often left out of live performances due to their limited popularity (as was the case for "La Tocada"). The significance of Molotov using words such as *puto* is not only in their attempts to redefine it or how it is being used, but it is important because there is now a conversation on what the true meaning of the word might be and how its use and ban affects others. Furthermore, it puts into question the delicate nature of language, in which meaning is not always uniform and rarely remains defined by its origin. As exemplified through *albur*, speech without contextualized intent can be misunderstood and I argue the same can be said about the word

*puto*. While Molotov and other artists may not always have the power to create social change, their songs can spark conversations on the meaning and value of language.



## CHAPTER IV

### WITH ALL DUE RESPECT:

#### LOCALIZING ENGLISH IN MOLOTOV'S COVERS

“Siendo irrespetuosos, contestatarios, divertidos... Molotov juega con el lenguaje, juega con nosotros, juega con ellos y lo más importante es que ven lo que pasa y lo mete[n] en esa licuadora en la que cotidianamente están construyendo y haciendo su música.”<sup>121</sup>

- Javier Solorzano

#### 4.1 Introduction

It is difficult to categorize the music of Molotov into a single genre, since too many of their songs are grounded in hip-hop/rap, punk rock, heavy metal, funk and pop. Even more recognizable Mexican genres, such as ranchera and cumbia, have made their way into the band's recognizable repertoire. Indeed, it is far more revealing to analyze their music as observing the world around them and recontextualizing it. Though they were not explicitly presented as such, the previous two chapters focus on how Molotov reacted to and recontextualized the problems of Mexican television, inequality and freedom of speech. However, the driving force behind these problems is the same that arises from attempting to identify the band's genre: globalization. Even the initial cultural clashes seen with the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors and during the process of colonization, bringing with them foreign religion, language, and industries, can be interpreted as early forms of globalization. However, throughout the 20th century, Mexico presented globalism as modernization and as a means of validating their potential to foreign investors.

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<sup>121</sup> Olallo Rubio. “Gimme The Power - Documental Completo (Olallo Rubio).” (YouTube video, 1:38:57. September 8, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MoBgwboIs0>) 37:35-37:43.

The Tlatelolco massacre perpetrated to silence protesting prior to the 1968 Summer Olympics, as well as the attempts to eradicate Mexican soccer fans' homophobic chants in preparation for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, are two examples of how Mexican leadership has attempted to portray Mexico as a civilized nation in the world stage. The same happens with music: rock, labelled as a promoting rebellion amongst youth, struggled to reach mainstream broadcasts throughout Mexico for most of the second half of the 20th century.<sup>122</sup> By then, in the middle of the 90s, global changes had affected rock (as punk rock and heavy metal gained popularity), and new genres (hip-hop and rap) brought about new forms of language. Globalization (enacted through trade agreements such as NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement)<sup>123</sup> brought about new forms of protest. This gave Molotov the means to create a unique form of expression to reinterpret the world around them through a Mexican lense.

Classifying Molotov into a single genre would be too difficult an undertaking, but it is necessary to discuss their style and what it conveys. However, rather than focusing this chapter on their entire oeuvre, a task that would require an entirely different analysis than the one presented thus far, I have chosen to offer instances where Molotov's language, both musically and linguistically, deals with issues of globalization. The reason for this is simple: global influences are a constant force that cannot be ignored in discourse surrounding Mexican cultural productions and struggles for power. Even what is likely considered the most recognizable genre of traditional Mexican music, mariachi, is performed with instruments introduced by Europeans, such as violins, guitars, harps, and trumpets. The same can be said of genres from the northern regions of Mexico, such as ranchera and banda, which can include accordions, drum sets (mainly

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<sup>122</sup> Rubio. "Gimme The Power - Documental Completo (Olallo Rubio)." 18:54-23:06

<sup>123</sup> In Mexico this protesting was led by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation who fought for indigenous civil rights after their livelihoods were threatened by the policies brought on by NAFTA.

snare and cymbals), and a mix of brass and woodwinds. Even marimbas, recognized by Mexico as the national instrument, are rooted outside the Americas in the African continent.

The common trend is that these foreign instruments are recontextualized in Mexico. Instruments are repurposed into ensembles where each member would appear foreign to the rest, musicians simultaneously reinvent musical genres through hybrid styles that localize melody, harmony, and language. Molotov's own instrumentation includes the basic rhythm section of rock bands: electric guitar, bass guitar and drum set. However, the band doesn't only use two bass guitars, instead, members play all instruments interchangeably. While Miguel Huidobro and Juan Ayala are considered the bass players, Randy Clifford is the drummer, and Ismael Fuentes the guitarist, all members perform all instruments during live performances. Similarly, all band members sing and rap, and do so in Spanish, English, and use *albur* in both languages.

The foreign influences on the band are not difficult to notice. And while their music offers plenty of examples, as hip-hop and rock are both international genres, Molotov's linguistic capabilities show a more dramatic display of the effects of globalization on Mexican music. Although all four band members use English, their bilingual capabilities vary drastically. The most English proficient band member is Ebright, who immigrated from Michigan to Mexico as a teenager. Ebright also represents the effects of globalization, as his presence in the band is proof enough that the concerns of the members are not only those internal to Mexico, but also the global issues reflected in the country.

While the use of English by the band could be viewed as an attempted verbal signaling to place their music on the global market and for a global audience, there are several questions to consider. Mainly, are there connections between the issues being discussed in English and those who are meant to understand such messages? This question is pertinent because English is rarely

the only language present: most songs that use English exhibit intricate code-switching, often relying on Mexican humor and word play, such as *albur*. Furthermore, English is not a widely spoken language in Mexico. And here we are presented with another issue: what is the relationship between Spanish and English in Molotov's music and what effects do these languages have on each other? While some songs may rely on code-switching between verses, others do so at the sentence level and switch so often that the rhyming scheme alternate between languages. For example, the line "Bone break dance intenso, lets go/Dance and dense denso" (Bone break dance intensely, let's go/Dance and hit yourselves densely).<sup>124</sup> Another issue to consider, especially when thinking of musicality and rhyming, is the way language is performed orally, i.e., how it is pronounced. Are there performative tendencies, such as accents or voice acting, that point towards mimicry or parody?

While there are songs within Molotov's repertoire that discuss global issues—such as immigration ("Voto Latino" or "Latin Vote"; "Frijolero" or "Beaner"; and more recently "Dreamers") and climate change ("El Mundo" or "The World"), the band rarely discusses globalism directly. However, by looking at the treatment of language and musical genre, it is possible to reach conclusions about how globalization has shaped their political and social stances. In order to better understand these issues, it is necessary to define their approach to songwriting through globalism and musical parodying, and through this framework analyze the songs that translate and parody music imported into Mexico.

#### **4.2 Globalism and Localized English**

Molotov's use of English and Spanish showcases virtuoso linguistic capabilities, and their ability to adopt multiple genres is no less impressive. Both of these

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<sup>124</sup> Molotov. "Dance and Dense Denso" Genius. (Accessed June 3, 2019. <https://genius.com/Molotov-dance-and-dense-denso-lyrics>.)

characteristics/accomplishments place the band within a hybrid musical locus that has simultaneously prompted admiration and contempt from critics and fellow artists.<sup>125</sup> This same hybridity allows the band to discuss topics both directly and indirectly. While one language might be limited in its accessibility and capacity for expression, code-switching provides speakers access to alternative ways of voicing concerns. When using English, Molotov do so from the point of view of those educated in a region that is not inhabited by an English-speaking majority. This means language must be recontextualized to adapt to the linguistic skills of speakers and listeners, and repurposed in order to make it suitable for Molotov and Mexican fans. To gain a better understanding of how that happens, it is pertinent to discuss definitions for globalism and the place of English within it.

The term globalization has generated discourse in virtually all fields of intellectual discourse. And while there is little doubt that globalization exists and its effects influence nearly all aspects of daily life, there continues to be disagreement on its definition. As it is a term that I will be using throughout this study, a brief discussion of how my interpretation used is in order. In addition, this definition is also inherently tied to everything else that is being discussed through this thesis and must therefore be contextualized within Mexico. Jan Scholte argues that no definition of globalization is politically neutral and that “every definition is relative.”<sup>126</sup> And when thinking of Mexico, it is clear that global interest in the country lies within both *modernization* and *universalization*. This is explicitly named as the purpose when Mexico finds itself in world view, as exemplified by the 1968 Olympic Games held in its capital.<sup>127</sup> As stated

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<sup>125</sup> Olallo Rubio. “Gimme The Power - Documental Completo (Olallo Rubio).” (YouTube video, 1:38:57. September 8, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MoBgwboIs0>)

<sup>126</sup> Jan A. Scholte. “What is Globalization? The Definitional Issue – Again.” (Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick, CSGR Working Paper 109/02, 2002) 6

<sup>127</sup> Bustamante, *Muy Buenas Noches*, 146

in the first chapter, showcasing infrastructure and ability to grant security to international guests was paramount for Mexican officials. This is similarly shown in the controversy of homophobic chants in Mexican soccer stadiums, as the standard of appropriate behavior was set by what was considered ethically appropriate, such as what chants are allowed, within global spaces.

Scholte states that *universalization* describes the dispersing of “experiences to people at all inhabited parts of the earth.”<sup>128</sup> Additionally, he explains that this view on globalization is tied to the effects of world homogenization in regards to culture—such as what toys are available, what appropriate business dress is, what transgressive behaviors must be eradicated through law.<sup>129</sup> Similarly, the definition of the word *puto*, which Molotov claims to signify several meanings and attitudes, when perceived globally, only retains its homophobic definition. This definition is imposed upon its users who are then told the word is not suitable for use and, henceforth, adherence to a universal attitude is demanded. Here I point back to Chapter III section 3.2 and Ruiz stating language must be used in local terms to prevent being conquered by outsiders. If we consider language in Mexico within this context, it is also important to understand that neither Spanish or English are native to the country, as both arrived through economic and imperialistic processes, bringing with them cultural change (Christianity and modernity). However, the locals experiencing globalization, as discussed in the Chapter III, repurpose these languages and used them now to mock the beliefs that initially accompanied them to Mexico. Nonetheless, it cannot be said that every Mexican has had the same experience with these two languages, as those who are born into Spanish-speaking communities interpret it as their native tongue. Within this context, we must realize that as Alastair Pennycook states “it

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<sup>128</sup> Scholte. “What is Globalization?” 11

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-2

is not so much whether or not one is born in a particular type of community but rather what one does with language.”<sup>130</sup> In Mexico, what is done with the language is playful and transgressive, and through *albur*, Spanish is used to speak about that which is meant to remain in unsaid.

It is impossible then to define languages as being monolithic. Given the status of both Spanish and English as world languages, we need to consider not only how those languages make their ways into communities, but how they are recontextualized within them. To this point, Pennycook offers further insight, “We do not live in a world where people conform mindlessly to the putative rules of language; we live in a world of language transgressions, impossible without some presumed order worth transgressing, and made possible by the desire for difference.”<sup>131</sup> In the same manner that natives played with the language brought on by Spanish conquest, English within Molotov’s repertoire receives treatment that gives words new meaning. An example can be seen in the following lyric: “yo me presento como Mr. Johnny Cash/Pero yo ni cash tengo”<sup>132</sup> (I introduce myself as Mr. Johnny Cash/But I don’t even have cash). The interesting thing in this line is that it does not work with proper pronunciation, where “Johnny” pronounced in English is a homophone of “yo ni” pronounced in Spanish. Given the many world Englishes (the United Kingdom and United States being the prime nations exporting it), it cannot be said that the language is homogenous. English exists in many varieties, such as those found in Australia, India and African countries, and it transforms by blending with the local users who reimagine it for different purposes. The same occurs in Mexico.

In terms of *modernization*, there is no better example than to discuss NAFTA and the impact it had on Mexico. The Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari (*PRI*) made a strong

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<sup>130</sup> Alastair Pennycook, *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows* (London: Routledge, 2007), 35.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 42

<sup>132</sup> Molotov. "La Necesidad" Genius. (Accessed June 3, 2019. <https://genius.com/Molotov-la-necesidad-lyrics>.)

push towards creating a tri-lateral free trade agreement between Mexico, Canada, and the US. In his 1991 presidential address, predating NAFTA's enactment by three years, Salinas stated his intent of creating a thriving economy within Mexico that would bring more jobs to the country while simultaneously offering its citizens competitive low prices on commercial goods.<sup>133</sup> Within this address, Salinas placed an emphasis on *modernization* by stating it was a "strategy for change, in response to [Mexico's] needs and the pulse of the world."<sup>134</sup> <sup>135</sup> When referencing NAFTA, Salinas claimed this negotiation would "permit [Mexico] to grow quickly to solidify plentiful employment and elevate the well-being of its citizens."<sup>136</sup> However, this sentiment was not echoed by all Mexican citizens.

The most dramatic response was seen through the Zapatista army's (EZLN) declaration of war on the Mexican government on January 1, 1994, the day NAFTA went into effect, putting into question Salinas's plans for Mexican modernization.<sup>137</sup> In their declaration (*Primera Declaración de la Selva Lacandona* or First Declaration from the Lacandona Jungle), EZLN pled to the Mexican lower class to join their community, located in the poorest Mexican state of Chiapas, in a battle against a "clique of traitors" that continuously "sell-out" their people to foreign entities.<sup>138</sup> During the decade NAFTA went into effect, Chiapas produced the vast majority of Mexico's natural gas and hydroelectric power, as well as substantial contributions of lumber, coffee, and beef.<sup>139</sup> However, the gains to be made from such products had not be

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<sup>133</sup> All excerpt provided from this address are translated from the Spanish by the author of this thesis.

<sup>134</sup> Carlos Salinas de Gortari, "Tercer Informe de Gobierno" (speech, Mexico City, November 1, 1991) ed. *Comercio Exterior*, <http://revistas.bancomext.gob.mx/rce/magazines/276/7/RCE7.pdf>

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> "Lacandon Jungle, First Declaration." The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, February 29, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog349>

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Rich, Paul. "NAFTA and Chiapas." (*The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 550, 1997), 78.



distributed to Chiapas and its communities remained without modern infrastructure, with 70 percent of its homes having no access to electricity.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, contrary to what Salinas stated, NAFTA forced Mexicans, such as *campesinos* (farmers) in Chiapas, to enter a competitive market in which their lack of technology and agricultural training placed them at a disadvantage to the more advanced farmers in the US and Canada.<sup>141</sup>

Essential to a globalism discourse on Molotov, Mexico, and EZLN, it must be acknowledged that the band never directly allied themselves with EZLN. However, Molotov's lyrics express similar sentiments to those expressed by EZLN. The clearest example of which is "Gimme tha Power," in which the band states that the same lower class producing for Mexico, is the one least likely to see the gains from it. In this song, the band addresses the lower class, "Gente que vive en la pobreza" (People who live in poverty) and tells them "la gente de arriba te detesta" (the people at the top hate you), and "nos llevan por donde les conviene" (they lead us in their best interest). "Y es nuestro sudor lo que los mantiene" (and it's our sweat that sustains them).<sup>142</sup> The final verse of "Gimme tha Power" ends with "Y es nuestro sudor lo que los mantiene/Los mantiene comiendo pan caliente/Ese pan, es el pan de nuestra gente" (And it's our sweat that maintains [the upper class]/It keeps them fed with warm bread/That bread, is the people's bread).<sup>143</sup> Molotov's lyrics clearly state that they side themselves with the lower classes whose work is taken advantage of to support the upper class and their needs. A similar alliance is echoed in the immigrant song "Frijolero," where the band raps "Te pagamos con petroleo o intereses nuestra deuda/Mientras tanto no sabemos quien se queda con la feria" (We [Mexicans]

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<sup>140</sup> Rich. "NAFTA and Chiapas," 78.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 73

<sup>142</sup> Molotov. "Gimme Tha Power" Genius. (Accessed June 3, 2019. <https://genius.com/Molotov-gimme-tha-power-lyrics>.)

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

pay our debts to you [the US] with oil and high interests/Meanwhile we don't know who keeps the change). This lyric seems to reference NAFTA more directly, as it speaks of Mexican oil sells to the US and the lack of profits being distributed to the Mexican lower class who, in the context of this song's broader discussion of immigration, are displayed from their homes in search of a better life. Keeping the band's alliance with the lower class in mind, as well as the way in which Molotov uses English and *albur*, the following section offers an analysis of how Molotov recontextualizes global music for local purposes.

#### **4.3 Localization Through Musical Covers**

In 2004, Molotov released *Con Todo Respeto* (With All Due Respect), an album that included covers of groups from the United States, Europe, South America, as well as Mexico. While Molotov refers to these covers as tributes, sometimes the music appears closer to parody. In what follows I will consider Molotov's *Con Todo Respeto*, as well as "Rap, Soda y Bohemia" and "Payaso", to explore the transformations that occur between the original songs and Molotov's renditions. These covers are mostly sung/rapped in Spanish while the original languages vary between English, German, and Spanish. While translating lyrics demands adaptation and transformation—especially when rhythms, rhyming schemes, and melodies are more important to a song's recognizable structure—Molotov's covers have been known to stray so far from the original that the new lyrics could be seen as discussing an entirely different subject. Such is the case for "Rap, Soda y Bohemia," in which Queen's original anguish and guilt is replaced by Molotov's *albur* which glorifies murder while creating sexual double entendres.

It is within this sexual wordplay that I propose a carnivalesque approach to analyzing their music. There are parallels between Bakhtin's folk laughter and Molotov's use of *albur*. As

many of these covers contain translations, there needs to be a discussion of Paul Ricœur's ideas of *faithfulness* (translated texts where original meaning is retained) and *betrayal* (translated texts where original meaning is not retained) to describe how accurate Molotov's covers are at conveying the original message and what it might reveal about the band's intentions in transforming the music. Finally, these observations are framed through Alan O'Connor's reading of Bourdieu's *habitus* or how individuals perceived the world through their social sphere. It is my aim here to observe how and why Molotov transforms global music through their covers and use that as a basis to understand how some in Mexico deal with globalism.

Though a large part of their repertoire is original, Molotov also dedicate a significant amount of creative energy to musical covers. However, while the band often refers to these covers as tributes, it is just as often that they appear more akin to parodies. This is not only due to the musical transformation of genre, as can be seen in their cover of Los Tigres Del Norte's "Ya Te Velé", where the band changes the genre from *ranchera* to heavy metal,<sup>144</sup> but also in the way they recontextualize language through word play. As was discussed in Chapter III, Molotov's cover of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," where they use the constant "mama" by avoiding its Spanish translation "mamá" (with stress on the second syllable) and opting for the Spanish homophone "mama" (meaning to suck in Mexico when the first syllable is emphasized).<sup>145</sup> The prosodic shift gives insight into Molotov's performative choices, and their towards signaling two things at once. First, it relates to "mother" in the sense that the listener knows Molotov is referencing "Bohemian Rhapsody", but it also references the local language by playing with word stress to create a parody of the original. This type of usage of English

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<sup>144</sup> Molotov. "Ya Te Vele" Genius. (Accessed June 3, 2019. <https://genius.com/Molotov-ya-te-vele-lyrics>.)

<sup>145</sup> Molotov. "Rap, Soda Y Bohemia" Genius. (Accessed June 3, 2019. <https://genius.com/Molotov-rap-soda-y-bohemia-lyrics>.)

relates to a performative action, defined by Pennycook as going “beyond a notion of the original and mimicry to include parody and appropriation.”<sup>146</sup>

It is often difficult to understand the references of a parody. This is what makes Molotov’s use of language intriguing: on one end there is high virtuosity in language use, but that also requires listeners to be attuned with what Molotov is signaling or alluding to. Molotov performs in a hybrid language that challenges listeners. Elijah Wald writes, “For bilingual people to exist, there must first be monolingual people who speak discrete languages. For musical fusions to be possible, there must first be discrete styles of music that one can fuse.”<sup>147</sup> It is true that Molotov’s style is connected to the culture around them, which contain various uses of language as well as genre. Bakhtin illuminates the association between tribute and parody by stating that when a speaker uses different accents or languages this can “[occur] across the entire spectrum of tones – from reverent acceptance to parodic ridicule – so that it is often very difficult to establish precisely where reverence ends and ridicule begins.”<sup>148</sup> This certainly seems to be the case with Molotov, and it seems to fall into another of Wald’s arguments, namely, that “People twist language for many reasons, some of which annoy other people – and sometimes annoying other people is the intention.”<sup>149</sup> The band themselves acknowledges this through covers in which lyrics, already in Spanish, are recreated to change meaning. Their use of Spanish, English, slang and exaggerated voices in covers such as “Payaso,” originally written by José José, bring out the humorous character which made Molotov famous.

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<sup>146</sup> Pennycook, *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows*, 76

<sup>147</sup> Elijah Wald, “Reinventing Ranchera: Music, Language, and Identity in the Southwest.” (PhD diss., Tufts University, Medford, MA, 2015), 146.

<sup>148</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Jay Wright and Michael Holquist (University of Texas Press, 1981), 77

<sup>149</sup> Elijah Wald, “Reinventing Ranchera,” 197

In this cover, the band changes José José's original intent of the word *payaso* (clown), which was the character in a story of heartbreak; his clown is laughed at for having an unattainable love interest, a clown whose sole purpose revolves around this love. This is why he is called a clown, for not being clever enough to stay away from the impossible and, instead, foolishly following his heart. This song culminates in the chorus: "Y es verdad soy un payaso/Pero que le voy a hacer?/Uno no es lo que quiere/Sino lo que puede ser" (It is true that I am a clown/But what can I do?/One is not what he wants/One is what he can be).<sup>150</sup> By contrast, Molotov's clown is not lovestruck: this clown is insulting, ridiculous, sexual, and lives in excess. Ebright raps in English:

It's the big pimpin' pimpin', el gran pa payaso,  
He be sittin' up all alone with a bottle in his castle  
Chuggin' it luggin' it and dubbin' it down in it and dealin' with the hassle  
Women and wine and the big joke, joke: meet the four Molotov assholes!<sup>151</sup>

Molotov's version keeps the chorus word for word but José José's clown has morphed. He is aligned with Bakhtin's descriptions of the archetype found in folk carnival humor, the clown is comical and always a clown regardless of the setting.<sup>152</sup> Furthermore, the laughter found in José José's original is resigned to being the object of mockery. Such negativity loses humor and places those who laugh at the clown above it. This is not the context of Molotov's *payaso*, whose laughter is carnivalesque. For Bakhtin, carnival laughter encompasses all, including those who are doing the mocking.<sup>153</sup> AQUI Such is the case in Molotov, whose clown is themselves.

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<sup>150</sup> José José. "Letra 'Payaso' de Jose Jose." (Musica.com. Accessed December 11, 2017. <https://www.musica.com/letras.asp?letra=80887>)

<sup>151</sup> Molotov. "Letra 'Payaso' de Molotov." (Musica.com. Accessed December 11, 2017. <https://www.musica.com/letras.asp?letra=80889>)

<sup>152</sup> Bakhtin, "Introduction." Translated by Helene Iswolsky. In *Rabelais and his World*, 8

<sup>153</sup> Bakhtin, "Introduction." Translated by Helene Iswolsky. In *Rabelais and his World*, 8

They simultaneously mock others and understand that nobody is exempted from this laughter, not even them.

“Payaso” exhibits another tool used by Molotov’s lyrical capabilities, which is not limited to code-switching, but includes a relationship through translation. While many of their covers retain the original language, whether momentarily or completely, they also practice reinterpretation through translation. However, whereas the basic plot or outline of the songs is frequently retained, their context is usually transformed to create a localized meaning. This can be seen in “The Revolution will not be Televised,” a cover of Gil Scott-Heron’s song by the same name. Molotov retains the English title but the lyrics are translated almost exactly into Spanish, where only names are changed if they could be unfamiliar to Mexican audiences. While Scott-Heron speaks of Nixon as a symbol for corrupt American politics,<sup>154</sup> Molotov’s cover presents the Mexican equivalent, the corrupt president López Obrador.<sup>155</sup> However, the essence of the song is kept, namely, a discontent over politicians and media outlets that must end in a revolt in the streets. Wald offers some insight as to why this sort of signaling works. He brings up Van Morrison’s “Brown Eyed Girl” and its popularity within Hispanic groups in the United States, theorizing that if the song were titled “Blue Eyed Girl,” the signaling would not be as relevant, or popular, within the same demographic.<sup>156</sup> Whether or not this is true, changes in lyrics made by Molotov are inherently necessary in order to appeal to their audience, and thus the music is localized.

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<sup>154</sup> Gil Scott-Heron. "Gil Scott-Heron Lyrics - The Revolution Will Not Be Televised." (AZLyrics. Accessed December 11, 2017. <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/gilscottheron/therevolutionwillnotbetelevised.html>.)

<sup>155</sup> Molotov. "Molotov Lyrics - The Revolution Will Not Be Televised (La Revo)." AZLyrics. Accessed December 11, 2017. <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/molotov/therevolutionwillnotbetelevisedlarevo.html>.

<sup>156</sup> Wald, “Reinventing Ranchera,” 130

*Con Todo Respeto* proves interesting because not only does Molotov change the musical style of most of the originals, which is commonplace for artists trying to recreate songs in their own genre, but the band also alters the lyrics to change the meaning of songs. This can be seen in their cover of The Misfits' song "I turned into a Martian". In this song, Molotov changes the style of the original from punk to *cumbia* and the lyrics from English to Spanish. This is done by displacing the beat of the guitar. While punk rock tries to have distorted guitars accentuating the downbeats, Molotov's rhythm guitar only plays on the upbeat of one and three. However, this change does not distort the song enough to make it unrecognizable. In Andrey V. Denisov's article, "The Parody Principle in Music", the author argues that in order for the listener to interpret a musical piece as being a parody of another, the new material must retain a similar structure to the original.<sup>157</sup> <sup>158</sup> This constant structure can be heard between the distorted power chords of The Misfits' original and the lead guitar melody in Molotov's cover that plays the same notes.

**The Misfit's "I Turned into a Martian" verse rhythm guitar**



**Molotov's "Me Convierto en Marciano" verse lead and rhythm guitar**



<sup>157</sup> Although "parody" here is used by Denisov as having carnivalesque and/or grotesque qualities, I believe the argument can be expanded to covers.

<sup>158</sup> Andrey V. Denisov. "The Parody Principle in Musical Art." (*International Review Of The Aesthetics And Sociology Of Music* no. 1, 2015) 56

The chord progression for the Misfits follows C5-D#5-A#5 and is only a half-step away from Molotov's C#5-E5-B, keeping the distance between notes the same. Furthermore, the lyrics keep the same rhythmic pattern, which allows for even more structural connection.

Something similar happens in other songs from the same album. Molotov's covers "Amateur" (Amature; originally "Rock Me Amadeus" by Falco) and "Diseño Rolas" (I Design Beats; originally "Designer Music" by Lipps Inc, respectively) keep close to the original when musical elements such as melody, rhythm, and harmony are concerned. However, the translation of these songs from their original language to Spanish seems to have lost some things while gaining others. "Amadeus", the original song by Falco that inspired "Amateur", speaks of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart living the life of a rocker with wine, women, and song to go around. Molotov changes Falco's keyword "Amadeus" to the phonetically similar Spanish word "amateur" to give the song a different meaning. The Mexican band sings of an amateur rock band that is struggling to make it in the music business. Despite historical inaccuracies regarding Mozart's life, Falco's character is presented as a superstar, while Molotov's character is the complete opposite, so far in fact that Molotov's recording includes a track of a presumably dissatisfied audience booing their performance. There is a similar (mis)translation in other covers. "Diseño Rolas" transforms Lipps Inc's "Designer Music" but the message remains similar enough to the original. Although Lipps Inc protagonist seems a music marketing genius and Molotov's is closer to a lazy artist who gets by on talent, both songs present musicians as designers.

This brings us to a consideration of translation. Philosophically speaking, Paul Ricœur does not believe that a translation is possible. This problem stems from the fact that languages are inherently rooted in the culture which speaks them, and, therefore, it is impossible to find a



word in a different language containing the same precise context. Ricœur believes that instead of seeking a perfect translation, the focus should be in whether or not a translation is *faithful* to the original or a *betrayal*.<sup>159</sup> Molotov engagement with both these styles of translation can be seen when analyzing different covers. I would argue that the cover song “Diseño Rolas” is *faithful* to the overall intent of the original, as both focus on a musician who composes (or designs) music with ease. While the details between the two songs might seem off, the meaning doesn’t veer as far of as it does in “Amateur”. In Molotov’s cover, Falco’s original character is mocked and degraded, in complete opposition to the world proposed by Falco. Perhaps Molotov is alluding to the music industry in Mexico, where most musicians will never achieve “rocker” status. Ultimately, this translation seems to be a *betrayal*.

Molotov’s approach to translation and musical covers appears to be a conscious effort to localize that which seems foreign to their fanbase in Mexico. This points to *linguistic hospitality*, defined by Ricœur as “the pleasure of dwelling in the other’s language... balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home”.<sup>160</sup> This is certainly something that can be witnessed through Molotov’s translations.

***End of first verse of “I Turned into a Martian”***

<u>Molotov’s Lyric</u>	<u>Translation to English</u>	<u>Original Lyrics</u>
No es el cuerpo marrano que solía tener	It’s not the pig-like body that I used to have	Not the body of a man from earth
Ni la cara mi reina que tú has de querer porque	Nor the face, my queen, that you probably want, because	Not the face of the one you love, 'cause
Me convierto en Marciano	I’m turning into a Martian	Well, I turned into a Martian

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<sup>159</sup> Paul Ricœur. *On translation* translated by Eileen Brennan. (London; New York : Routledge, 2006) 4-5

<sup>160</sup> Ricœur. *On translation*, 10

In the cover of “I turned into a Martian”, while the Misfits talk about the transformation by saying “Not the body of the man from earth, not the face of the one you love because/I turned into a Martian”, Molotov says “It is not the pig-like (or gross) body that I used to have, nor the face that you my queen would like, because I’m turning into a Martian”. Though the changes are minimal, the overall effect of the lyrics becomes more humorous. In addition, using “mi reina” (my queen) or “cocowash” (Mexican slang for brainwash which substitutes brain with coco, a vernacular reference to head) along with the cumbia musical style, transform the cover into something more relatable to Mexicans.

Similarly, Molotov builds humor by using *albur* as an effective tool. An example can be heard in “Rap, Soda y Bohemia” (cover of Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody”), where the storyline is very similar to the original, both narrators call out to “mama” and begin to tell the story of a murder committed by their own hand.

### ***Second verse of “Bohemian Rhapsody”***

#### **Molotov’s Lyrics**

Mama, ma-mate a un cabron  
Le vole la choya con un pistolón  
Mama, con el dedo en el gatillo  
Le meti 6 balas al cabrón por el fundillo

#### **Literal Translation to English**

Mama, I just killed a dumbass  
I blew his head up with a huge gun  
Mama, with my finger on the trigger  
I stuck 6 bullets in this asshole

#### ***Albur* Translation to English**

Suck, suck-off a dumbass  
Blow his head with a huge penis  
Suck, with a finger in the vagina  
I stuck 6 bullets in this asshole

#### **Original Lyrics**

Mama, just killed a man  
Put a gun against his head  
Pulled my trigger, now he’s dead  
Mama, life had just begun

Through the use of *albur*, Molotov adds suggestions of fellatio. As stated previously, this comes from the phonetic similarity between the words “mamá” (mother) and “mama” (to suck).

However, Molotov’s phallic references are continued throughout the fourth verse of the song,

where they use syllabic equivalence to match Queen's third verse. Where Queen sings "Easy come, easy go, will you let me go?" Molotov uses slang to match the number of syllables and say "Easy cum, easy go, wouldya gimme'a blow?". This is followed by "It smells like 'ohh,' would you just gimme'a blow" to match Queen's "Bismillah! No, we will not let you go!"<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, the rhythmic and rhyming structure of the lyrics is extremely different between the two. While Queen's song is developed by a calm and passive Freddie Mercury singing and the harmonies are carried out by the relaxed and melancholic piano, Molotov's version relies on sampling and beats that border along aggressiveness. All the while the Mexican band raps with raw powerful voices.

When we analyze the translated lyrics there seems to be a different type of discrepancy. In the second verse Queen sings "Mama, just killed a man/Put a gun against his head/Pulled my trigger, now he's dead". Molotov sings "Mama, ma-mate a un cabron/Le volé la choya con un pistolón" (Mama, I killed an asshole/I blew up his head with a huge gun). This lyric, however, also contains a hidden message through *albur*. While "ma-mate" is supposed to be heard as a stuttering recalling "mama", "mamate" means to "go suck." Though the literal translation of Molotov's verse might seem at least in line with Queen's original murder, this verse, as others in the song, is simultaneously implying sexual acts.

This song exemplifies how Molotov's covers localize the music that is imported to Mexico. While Mexico's culture might be present globally through exports such as agricultural products or even the immigrant bodies that carry their culture with them, most Mexicans cannot afford to visit the world outside of their country.<sup>162</sup> However, they get to experience the globe

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<sup>161</sup> Queen. "Bohemian Rhapsody" Genius. (Accessed June 3, 2019. <https://genius.com/Queen-bohemian-rhapsody-lyrics>.)

<sup>162</sup> Alan O'Connor. "Punk subculture in Mexico and the anti-globalization movement: a report from the front." *New Political Science* 25, (2003). 44

through imports such as music. In Alan O'Connor's article, "Punk and Globalization", the author notes that Mexico's rock scene from 1955 to around 1970 was mostly composed of Mexican rock groups producing covers of American music.<sup>163</sup>

O'Connor states that he believes Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* is still relevant. Though now more than ten years outdated, O'Connor's work is relevant to my research because it was published within one year of Molotov's *Con Todo Respeto*. O'Connor speaks at length of the difference between the punk movement globally and in Mexico. One such difference is that in Mexico, as opposed to some European and American punk circles, there is a greater emphasis on community.<sup>164</sup> This is in direct contradiction to some punk collectives that would prefer complete autonomy. And it is because of this sort of beliefs that O'Connor speaks of *habitus*, that habitat that creates a structure through which we interact with the world around us. Mexicans do not experience globalism as Europeans do. While Europeans travelled, and continue to do so, as adventurers to a New World, the other was forced to become the New World.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Molotov's covers represent a significant look at how global trends are reinterpreted for local purposes. When looking at "Me Convierto en Marciano," the changes made to core lyrical concepts illustrate Molotov's recontextualization for local purposes. By using local slang in Spanish and English, Molotov present a Mexican version of The Misfits' original that is further localized through the use of cumbia rhythms. Similarly, the lyrical changes made seen in "Rap, Soda y Bohemia" point to a local vision of murder that sadly glorifies perpetrators of such

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<sup>163</sup> Alan O'Connor, "Punk and Globalization". International journal of cultural studies 7 (2), (2004) 177

<sup>164</sup> O'Connor, "Punk subculture in Mexico and the anti-globalization movement", 46

acts.<sup>165</sup> Molotov's use of English in both imported and local music cover showcases the way in which the band engages with globalism and blends it with local ideas for their public.

Mexico has been shaped by labels such as *primitive, undeveloped, inferior, colonized, dependent, marginal, and Third World*,<sup>166</sup> words that without global influence might never have entered the identity of the country. Mexico first went through a major change led by the Spanish conquest. However, with global ideas and imposed ideals of what it means to be human and what human rights are, there is another change happening. Just as the Spanish conquest changed language, the new change has brought new terms into Mexico: sexism, gender roles, empowerment, homophobia, diversity.<sup>167</sup> And though these concepts may have existed before, they have never been articulated with the fervor that they are now. However, as it was with NAFTA, these concepts are not easily accepted by all in Mexico. These are a people that have seen protests end in massacres and intellectuals disappear for speaking out; this is a country that led a revolution only to replace a 35-year dictator with a seven-decade dictatorship.<sup>168</sup> When new ideas come into Mexico, they are reimagined to fit local life. Just as the Nahuas reimagined the Spanish language to recreate *albur* and just as Molotov reimagined the songs in *Con todo Respeto*.

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<sup>165</sup> In Mexico, narco-culture and the violence brought on by it have created a glorification for murderers that often sees drug lords gaining the title of folk sainthood. (see: Tony M. Kail, *Narco-Cults: Understanding the Use of Afro - caribbean and Mexican Religious Cultures in ... the Drug Wars* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2017))

<sup>166</sup> Carlos Monsiváis, "México a principios del siglo XXI: la globalización, el determinismo, la ampliación del laicismo." *Debate Feminista* 33, no. 17. (2006) 204

<sup>167</sup> Monsiváis, "México a principios del siglo XXI" 205

<sup>168</sup> "¿Por Qué Temen Algunos Mexicanos El Regreso Del PRI Y La "dictadura Perfecta"?" *La Información*, July 02, 2012, accessed June 04, 2019, [https://www.lainformacion.com/mundo/por-que-temen-algunos-mexicanos-el-regreso-del-pri-y-la-dictadura-perfecta\\_kynq2dnqddbaxhfppkmw16/](https://www.lainformacion.com/mundo/por-que-temen-algunos-mexicanos-el-regreso-del-pri-y-la-dictadura-perfecta_kynq2dnqddbaxhfppkmw16/).

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

By analyzing Molotov's music videos and lyrics, this thesis aimed to show how the Mexican band portrays problems faced by those who reside in Mexico. Mainly, the band is presented as voicing discontent with social issues while staying true to Mexican humor. Through their attacks against Televisa, the band articulates issues of censorship and biased news coverage to point at unethical journalistic practices. At the same time, Molotov also speaks of exploitation of performers employed by Televisa to offer warnings to those hoping to break into the television industry. Molotov's use of *albur* showcases a staple of Mexican humor that represents the speech style used by the Mexican working class to utter erotic messages the Catholic church has attempted to silence within the country. And though it was initially used to recontextualize the Spanish brought on by the conquest of the Americas, Molotov's music exemplifies how *albur* can be adapted to modern problems of language brought on by globalization and the arrival of English and foreign music to Mexico—transgressing against *albur* itself and pushing the boundaries of freedom of speech.

Branding Televisa as an ideological state apparatus, as was done in the second chapter, is important because it uncovers possible motivations for Molotov's attacks against the network. Televisa's distortion of the Tlatelolco massacre, whether it was believed by viewers or not, was a clear threat to those tuning into their broadcast: protesting will be met with severe repercussions and those involved will be presented as unnamed terrorists. Similarly, the Mexican government's and Televisa's campaign against actresses such as Kate del Castillo demonstrates that Televisa continues to use its platform to support existing power structures that aim to repress free speech against the network and government officials. However, the way in which Molotov's messages

have been received by Mexican audiences show that there are many who agree with the claim that Televisa's is a tool for the government and more specifically for *el PRI*. While Televisa may be using its platform to distribute traditional conservative values held by the government, Molotov's uses their platform to counteract them and warns people by saying "don't be fooled."

The Mexican tradition of *albur* is representative of the way in which the country's working class reinvents language to enact a humorous way to perform freedom of speech. Through its use, people such as Lourdes Ruiz Baltasar have found ways to communicate bodily desires that continue to be repressed within the country. However, since its initial days in the Nahuas' humorous protest against the Spanish language, *albur* has been bound by norms that once again repress speakers' freedom of speech. Through its rules—such as the avoidance of vulgarities—set by formal competitions and promoted by accomplished users of *albur*, what was a tool for protest has turned into a regulated, albeit complex, way of speaking. It is my argument that Molotov's use of vulgarities alongside *albur* helps regain the tradition of protest as a bastion for freedom of speech. By framing the practice through Bakhtin's carnivalesque theories of folk laughter, I propose that Molotov's use of vulgarities extends *albur* to those whose vocabulary includes words often thought to be too crude. This issue is expanded by the use of words like *puto*, which many Mexicans believe should be eradicated from public spaces. However, Molotov's use of the word and its other perceived meanings give voice to people who feel the slur *puto* is also part of Mexican traditions.

Molotov's use of language reimagines global music through covers, where they recontextualize songs for local purposes. Their humor transforms both genre and language in order to create arrangements that speak to Mexican audiences. By looking at the band's covers album, *Con Todo Respeto*, and framing it through globalism theories, Chapter IV exemplifies

how Molotov showcases the transformation of global ideas and the English language in Mexico. It is not difficult to conceive that songs that speak of a murderer's regret and anguish, such as Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," could be recontextualized as glorifying a murderer who shows no remorse, especially when considering Mexico's growing violence. Furthermore, taking into account the tradition of *albur*, where vocal inflections and cultural knowledge are paramount for decoding hidden messages, it is no surprise that Molotov reinterprets music for local purposes. Similar to how the Nahuatl people transformed the songs brought over by the Spanish church, Molotov transforms the global music that reaches Mexico.

There are several ways in which the analysis presented throughout this thesis can be expanded through further research. While Molotov's music continues to garner attention—evident by their yearly international tours, collaborations, and recent MTV unplugged album *El Desconecte* (2018)—a more detailed look at how their music resonates with younger audiences could illuminate whether their messages continue to represent Mexican discontent and humor. Molotov originated while *el PRI* was still in power, but the official party's grip has waned in recent years through the elections of presidents from other political parties,<sup>169</sup> it is my opinion that future research on Molotov would require looking at current political trends in Mexico and the approval ratings of such trends.

Concerning Molotov's humor, I believe doing an ethnographic research within Mexican communities known for their use of *albur* is necessary to further understand how the tradition appears in the band's lyrics. It is my suspicion that Molotov's *albur* is grounded on the way the tradition occurs in Mexico City. This could potentially hinder the ability of lyrics being understood by those outside the capital. My experience with *albur* is different and the examples I

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<sup>169</sup> Vicente Fox (2000-2006) from the National Action Party and current president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (elected in 2018) from the National Regeneration Movement



am most familiar with are only used in the southernmost regions of Mexico. An example is the slang word *cocho* (vagina), and its use in the *albur* “Cinco Ocho” (literally translated to “five eight” but through phonetic similarity and polysemy also saying “sin cocho” or “without vagina”). However, *cocho* does not appear in Molotov’s lyrics. This makes me wonder how many instances of *albur*, regionally specific to Mexico City, I may have missed. This raises questions about how Molotov’s *albur* is understood by Mexicans living outside of the capital as well as abroad. I suspect that comparing the different ways in which communities enact and react to *albur* could provide further insight into how the Mexican working class navigates power struggles in daily life and whether or not these communities are able to connect with Molotov’s localized humor.

Throughout this research, I have realized that Molotov is overlooked by academia and often considered nothing more than a vulgar musical group by critics. However, I hope this thesis can serve as a reconsideration of Molotov’s music as giving voice to those in Mexico who are often ignored and told to keep quiet.

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